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punk planet

issue #28 • November/December '98 • last time at \$2

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Planeteers

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the hard rhymers

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the juice

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the track attacker

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supreme master of defense

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reviews

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ads, submissions & letters

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All ads are due
January 1
for PP30 March/April 1999

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... Are you the gambling type?
the risks

Dollars and Sense

Did you catch it? It's right there on the front cover, did you notice? I wouldn't be surprised if you didn't. Go back and check again... Still can't figure out what I'm talking about? Fine, I'll tell you: the cover price reads "Last time at \$2.00"

It ain't no lie. The issue of *Punk Planet* you hold between your sweaty palms is the last issue at our original \$2.00 cover price. Starting with issue #29, January/February 1999, *Punk Planet* will cost \$3.50. Feel free to get pissed, but hear me out first.

Since we set *Punk Planet*'s cover price, a lot has changed. The first issue of *Punk Planet* had a print run of 2,000 copies was only 56 pages long and completely volunteer-run. Back then covering our costs was fairly easy. Nowadays, we print four times as many and the page count has close to tripled. In addition, we pay every writer and staffmember that works on *Punk Planet*. Yet the cover price has always remained the same and we only raised ad rates once.

The increase in page number and print amount (not to mention staff costs, rent on office space etc...) certainly makes our costs higher. However, that's only half the story. By increasing the number of pages, *Punk Planet* has gotten progressively heavier. That means that it costs a lot more to ship. For us, it means that the current price structure for back issue orders sets us back \$2.62 cents for a single issue—an issue people pay \$2.00 for (you'll notice back issues now cost \$3.00).

The big deal is that distributors and stores—who have to pay for the zine to be shipped to them—can't afford to carry the zine anymore. One of our largest distributors loses between \$400 and \$800 each time a new issue of *Punk Planet* comes out. Many stores barely bother to keep *Punk Planet* in stock because after they've covered the shipping, they're maybe making fifteen cents on a copy.

Mordam Records, the people that handle all the distribution shitwork for us, have finally put their foot down and asked us to raise our price. Actually, they've been asking pretty much since we signed on with them two years ago. I've avoided the issue with them time and time again, but they kept on me and finally I gave in. And you know what? Now I'm excited about it. Really excited.

One of my arguments against raising the cover price has always been that there would be no perceived "added value" to a price increase. When other zines have raised their price without changing the zine at all, I've always noticed that a chorus of people reply with "What are we getting for our extra money?" I've even been a part of that chorus.

Well, there are changes happening at *Punk Planet*—changes completely due to the price increase. Starting with PP29 *Punk Planet* will no longer be printed on newsprint. We're moving to eco-friendly 50lb text paper that's 100% recycled (50% post-consumer) and uses a non-chlorine based bleaching process. I've always been concerned about the resource waste that went into the printing of *Punk Planet* and with some extra revenue coming in, we'll finally be able to address the problem. Plus, the paper looks fucking gorgeous.

Additionally, we're talking about redesigning the whole magazine and adding some cool new features and sections. But we're not getting rid of anything—everything you like about *Punk Planet* will still be there. There will just be more of it and it won't rub off on your hands.

More than anything else though, I'm excited because all of these changes embody the evolution that has happened at *Punk Planet* over the last four and a half years. In that time, we have gone from being a crappy zine that was fairly derivative in its content and myopic in its scope, to a magazine that is interested in expanding the boundaries in punk and making real change in the world at large. A change that dramatic deserves to be acknowledged. With PP29, it begins.

I don't expect all of you to be happy with the new price or the new look or anything else for that matter. Punks are nothing if not opinionated and I'm sure a lot of shit will be talked. I'm even pretty sure that a few of you will stop buying *PP*. To those of you, I can only say I'm sorry and thank you for supporting us for the last 28 issues.

For those of you that choose to support us for the next 28—or 48, or 238—issues, welcome aboard. I'm sure it will be an exciting ride.

See you at the next level,

DAN

The Bananas
 you've been waiting 2 years, and here it is. and it's worth the wait. 14 songs for the usual plan-it-x price of 5.00. if the monkeys could play guitar this is what it would sound like. on CD (what a compliment), out By Sept 16

operation cliff clavin
 Hi, I'm writing this ad on July 4th, sitting in peoples park, in Berkeley. we a 1 month into our 3 month summer tour. of course now your reading this and were done and home, hopefully. it's going good so far, no thanks to Josh, Mike or daniel (Promoters). any way Back to the AD: we sell this stuff

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Scared of Chaka How To Lose CD/10"

Those boys from Albuquerque just don't stop. Unrelenting on record as they are on tour. 8 new tunes ripped through in 18 minutes. The garage wellwaters must run deep there. Following in footsteps of copatriots the Drags, Scared of Chaka have turned up the Distortion, Speed and Energy on this one.

Now, For Your
Listening Pleasure

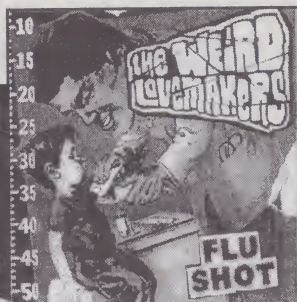
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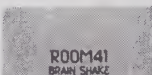
Nor'west my ass! Helldorado has as much to do with the Seattle music "scene" as Texas B-BQ to fish & chips. They've got their own li'l spin on things, givin' that Detroit sound and throwin' up a Southern fried (Oblivians) stench to it. Hold the towelettes, this shit's finger-lickin' good!



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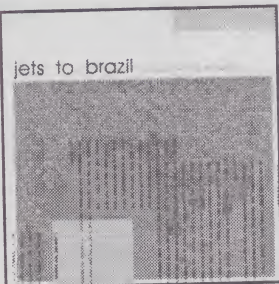
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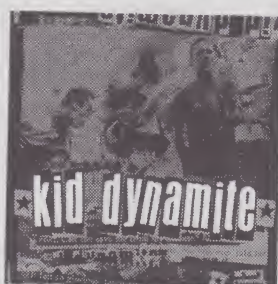
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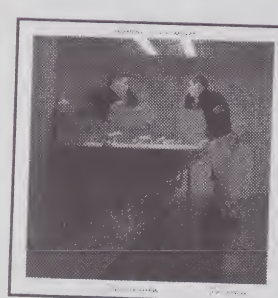
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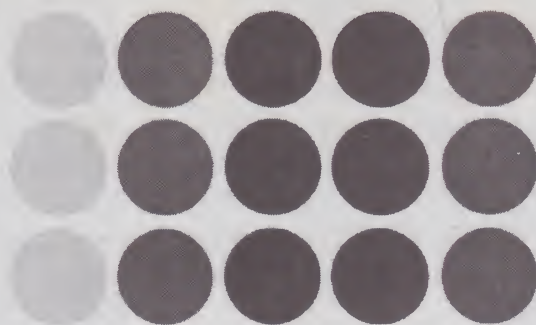


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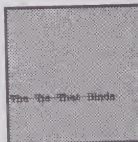


Sore Loser LP/CD

First full length from this Houston based pop-punk trio. After a 7", 2 splits, and some compilation tracks, this is by far their best work ever. 17 incredible songs in all. CD out July 15/LP out late August.

The Tie That Binds 7"

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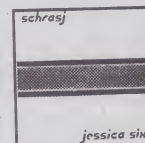


Millhouse/Dig Dug split 7"

Houston vs. San Antonio pop-punk. Check out the new Dig Dug 7" out on Rebound Records soon. Look for a new Dig Dug/Yellow #5 split CD and a Millhouse CD out soon.

Jessica Six/Schrasj split 7"

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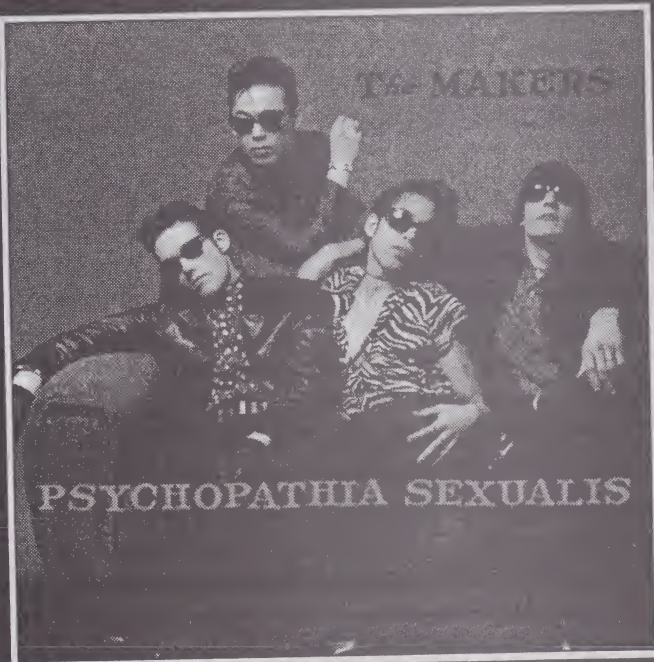
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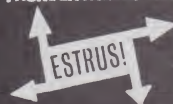
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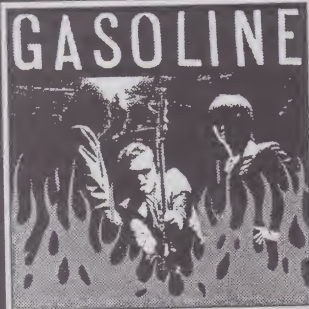


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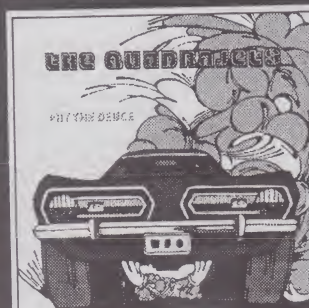
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LETTERS



Punk & Consumerism

Dan Sinker and *Punk Planet*,

In the intro Dan Sinker so eloquently wrote [PP27], he says that for the most part punk rock has much more to do with consumerism and that music, distro, zines, shows and fashion is far below the very notion of punk rock itself. I don't agree with this. I think that Dan is looking at the consumerism part of punk rock from the perspective of these kids being one giant herd of pellet gobblers buying up whatever they can find for punk credentials. Perhaps this is true. However, there are kids who go to shows to feel like they belong to something big and want to have a good time and release a lot of energy that is built up from not fitting in anywhere and perhaps they want to buy a shirt, pin, sticker, patch or album to remember how good that felt or to support the band that helped release that energy. For the most part, consumerism is spreading the ideas that Dan wants to believe in. Sometimes "aggressive music" is the best way to get someone to listen to you. Dan, I do not believe that you are wrong, I just don't think you are being fair to kids in punk rock. Instead of saying that they shouldn't spend so much money, you could use *Punk Planet* to help them believe in ideals that got you to start one of the more important forums in the punk rock community. No one really seems to take the responsibility to teach what they have learned, they just choose to judge the younger generation. Besides, if you really are against consumerism, you shouldn't feel obligated to "play into it" just so you can talk about it. What you are talking about is affording you the chance to do so.

Sincerely,

Aaron Gilmore
Wailuku, HI

Aaron,

I never said "punk rock has much more to do with consumerism and that music, distro, zines, shows and fashion is far below the very notion of punk rock itself." What I said was there are times when we need to check our-

selves to make sure that our priorities are straight. That our priorities are still about making real change—in ourselves, in our scene, in our community, in our country and our world—and not just about finding that clear vinyl Charles Bronson 7" or a copy of Girl Germs#1. Punk has always been at least in part a consumer movement—remember, the Sex Pistols were created in part to promote Malcom McLaren and Vivienne Westwood's store, Sex—but we can't let that aspect of it encompass all of it.

As far as using Punk Planet as a forum for said ideas or to teach "the younger generation" (sheesh, I'm only 23 years old here, don't age me before my time!), I think that's exactly what Punk Planet does. Sure, we don't say "It is a punk rock ideal to be pro-worker" but we do print pro-worker articles in a magazine clearly labeled as "punk." Context is everything. If it's in here, you can bet we think it's punk.

Yours,

Dan Sinker



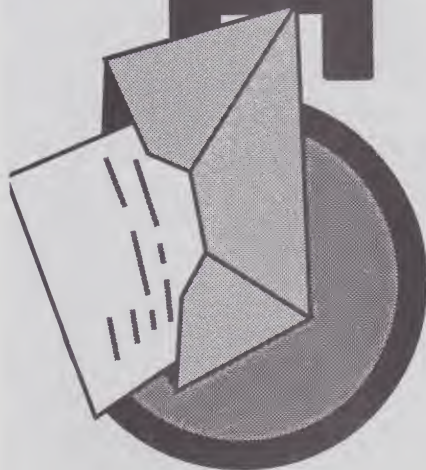
Everyone loves Larry

Dear *Punk Planet*,

Lenny Bruce, or maybe Mort Sahl once quipped that a conservative is a liberal who's been mugged. In Larry Livermore's case, it was his first million and not a mugging that turned him into a Pat Buchanan clone. He was always the consummate opportunist. I could spend pages replying to Larry's hackneyed column in PP27, but I'll confine myself to two short corrections and a brief comment.

Unlike Larry or the rest of his class, I work for a living. I work at Mordam Records, but not as the accountant. Katie (ex-Cockpit bassist) holds that position, and is an excellent accountant at that. I'm the office manager and as Larry likes to point out, Mordam is in the telephone book.

Whereas Larry used his record label to actively promote the East Bay gentrification he accuses me of, I was in on the beginning of the Oakland Tenants Union. Whereas Larry sold drugs to East Bay kids, I tutored them for free



in basic computer skills through the Express Project. Whereas Larry was jet-setting between the Bay Area and London, I supported Oakland Longshoremen in their efforts to prevent the unloading of scab cargo in solidarity with striking Liverpool dockers. My local community work speaks for itself, as does Larry's lack thereof. I'll let *Punk Planet's* readers judge which is more constructive.

Ben Weasel's letter in the same issue is brilliant. Not only is it accurate, Ben also experienced first hand being ripped off and fucked over by Larry when Livermore was principle owner of Lookout Records. Ben ain't no saint, but his letter nails down what I have to say about Larry Livermore with an anger and eloquence I could not have matched.

"Lefty" Hooligan
hooligan@sirius.com

PS—The rumor that Gilman Street is sponsoring a wrestling match between me (in a sheik black balaklava) and Larry (in a Mr. Potato head) is absolutely false!

Dear "Lefty:"

Sorry I unjustifiably promoted you to an accountant. I was pretty sure you used to be a bookkeeper, but whatever. I'm also sorry that you have so little self-respect that you keep working for a company you seem to think is dishonest. A major part of your job involves distributing Lookout Records, so if you really believe I "ripped off" Ben Weasel, you're a party to that ripoff yourself. However, since you must know that Mordam would never do business with a record label that cheats its artists, it's more likely you're a liar or delusional, possibly both. My roots are working class and I have the union cards to prove it. I was luckier than most working people in that I was able to make a lot of money doing a job I loved. Now that I don't need to hold down a regular job, I still work very hard; I just don't have to worry about getting paid for it. You're obviously very bitter about that. I suggest you take a long look in the mirror and then do something to better your own situation instead of unleashing a torrent of lies and abuse at anyone who's enjoyed a bit more success than you have.

Larry



Overpopulation and you!

Punk Planet,

I've been reading issue #27 and thoroughly enjoying it. Except for one little piece: John Gerkin's discussion of overpopulation in the DIY files on getting a vasectomy. I'm usually impressed with the quality of *Punk Planet's* articles, but that bit right there kind of caught me off guard.

I am not an angry white male. Don't even go there. I was in an environmental science class last year with an outstanding teacher, using an outstanding text and we spent a lot of time on overpopulation. I remember it. I was interested in it.

My only real problem with John's arguments is that they're based more on ideology than fact. I would agree with his points if we were making a moral argument about the disproportionate distribution of income. That is not the issue however. And it is not, as Mr. Gerkin put it, "empty blame" to talk about "poor women in third world countries having too many babies they can't afford." People reproduce exponentially. One person is born, that person grows up and, in turn, gives birth to someone else. The populations of third world countries are growing much, much faster than those of industrialized nations. Compared with the growth rate of Mexico, for example, the United States is the tortoise running against the hare. The planet cannot support a huge population of human beings growing exponentially indefinitely, no matter how just our means of distributing wealth may become.

As I mentioned, the populations of third world countries are growing much faster than their industrialized counterparts. Studies show that when women have a higher place in society—when they're better educated, when they're more empowered—they have fewer children. I don't have the statistics sitting in front of me, so go down to the library and verify them for yourself. Whereas women in industrialized nations have made gains in social standing, women in the third world are, for the most part, uneducated and lack the resources to educate themselves. Nor do they have access to birth control. Populations grow. Resources decline. Populations crash. People suffer.

The concept of "cultural carrying capacity" is important in this argument as well.

Basically, it talks about whether or not we want a world where a small number of people living well with a culture that can support the arts, maintain high standards of literacy and education, live up to standards of social justice and moral good and be generally comfortable all the while, or do we want a huge number of people living miserably, where the arts die (goodbye punk rock), where a majority of the population is again illiterate, where people are huddled together in slums, leaving us a world full of frustrated, crowded, impoverished people who then might lash out against one another. Mr. Gerkin's article seems to imply he would prefer the latter. True, the people of the United States over consume, and do so inconspicuously, harming themselves and others, physically and psychologically, but the issue is more complex than "simply a question of who controls where the food goes."

Men cannot live by bread alone. Neither can women. Neither can punk rock kids who read magazines and wear tapered black Dickies.

Thanks,

Colin
Chicago, IL



He's got the hook up

Punk Planet Readers,

Hello. I am trying to start up a sort of loose organization for small DIY screen printers, particularly those who make stuff of a political or witty nature. One purpose of this will be to act as an exchange network where we who make our own stuff and sell it at shows can trade our goods with each other and as a result carry a better selection. Also, it will be a good way for small screen printers to keep in touch, share techniques and information and basically look out for each other. I think this could be a really positive thing and I hope people will get involved.

Anyone who would like more information on this should contact me. Please include a stamp if you write by mail.

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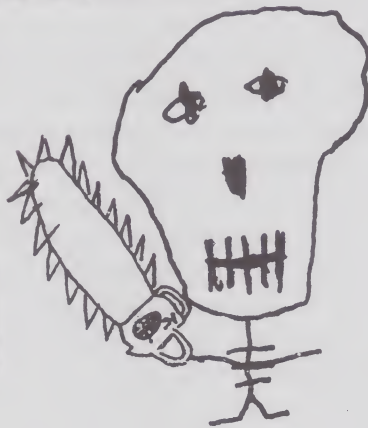
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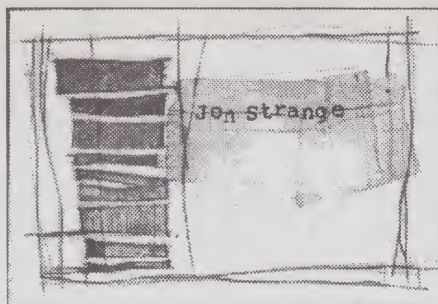


Sick of paying high prices to corporate record stores & still not being able to find all the indie releases you're looking for? Well, if so, check out VERY Distribution & Mailorder. We offer over 300 different labels and specialize in hardcore & punk rock, plus we even carry indie rock, ska, and metal stuff, too. We've got a huge 120+ page catalog, offer fast, honest, & reliable service, and we even accept all major credit cards. So what's the difference between us and them, you ask? Simple. We actually give a shit & listen to a lot of the music we sell, and we don't just see indie labels as a dollar sign or a new trend. How's that old saying go? I think it goes "by the kids, for the kids". Plus we sell stuff for a hell of a lot cheaper (i.e. most full length cds are priced from \$8-\$12 postpaid, t-shirts for \$12, lps for \$8, etc), and we've got tons of vinyl, too. So you want to find out more? Just send us \$2 (US), \$3 (world) for a copy of our latest mailorder catalog. It's fully descriptive, and filled with tons of cds, vinyl, cassettes, videos, zines, clothing, stickers, & more. So break away from the corporate stranglehold they've got on you, get off your lazy generation X ass, and send a few dollars to:



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“Is that briefcase for your *lobbying job*?” he sneered, as I walked up the steps from my first day at work. It caught me off guard; I was really excited about my new job, but his disgust was hard to shrug off. I realized that it wasn't just him. I wasn't sure of my decision, either.

I just started working as an intern for NARAL Ohio, the state affiliate of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League. It's pretty thrilling to finally get paid to work for an organization with a political outlook rather than an economic one. Most of the jobs I've had have been completely demoralizing—either it's meaningless work, or my employer is busy making money for the shareholders while they screw all the workers. This new job came as a welcome relief from all of that.

Even more than just a relief from normal work drudgery, this job also gave me a chance to see political work that could have an effect on the political climate outside of the punk scene, and outside of the activist community. And that's where the tough decision comes in. A lot of what I'm doing at work is centered around the upcoming state and national elections. We're compiling a voter's guide which rates each candidate's stance on issues of reproductive rights, including abortion, contraception, and sex education. We're also organizing “visibility” events for candidates we endorse for their pro-choice position. While I think this work is effective, it also reinforces an institution I don't support: the system of “representative democracy” in the US. It's pretty clear that this system is neither a democracy, nor representative of many besides those who never seem to have much trouble getting their voice heard: the government's corporate sponsors.

My only discomfort with working at NARAL Ohio stems from this element of our work, in that it lends some legitimacy to an illegitimate political system. Here's where the old debate about working within the system versus working without the system rears its head, in all its unresolved, boring familiarity. I have a big problem with the way that dichotomy is constructed – especially when the issue, like abortion and reproductive rights, is so tied in to the political discourse of the establishment, and is being

affected by laws that are written and enacted by the federal and state governments. When the issue is so entrenched in mainstream politics, I find it really difficult to suggest that action outside the system is any better than action inside the system. What matters to me is not whether I'm being appropriately anti-establishment, but whether I'm being politically effective.

Effective radical politics often involve subverting the dominant structures and ideas of our society. For example, it's clearly a radical subversion of traditional economics to set up a workers' collective, as some well known restaurants, publishing companies, and record labels have done. Part of the political statement in these examples is the simple refusal to work in ways endorsed by the dominant mode of capitalism. But that doesn't really apply to abortion, where the battle is very much in the courtrooms and legislatures. It's at this point that it's no longer effective to shun the political establishment—I can't really expect to have an impact on decisions being made if I refuse involvement.

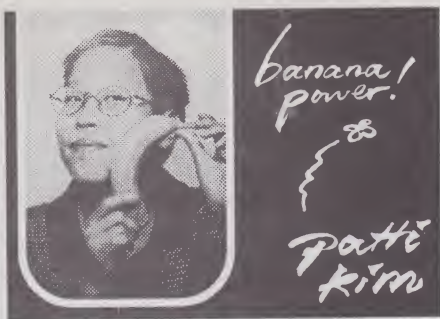
The punk fetish with “subverting the status quo” is especially misguided when applied to efforts to protect reproductive freedom. First of all, most of the efforts to limit a woman's right to choose involve changing laws, not keeping them the same. The decision in *Roe v. Wade* which protects each woman's right to an abortion is now 25 years old. Obviously, this is a right which any radical would insist on protecting—but that would mean defending a decision made by the federal Supreme Court. It would mean defending an element of “the system” so that it can continue to protect our rights.

OK, so I'm taking this a little far. I understand that the main argument against working within the system is that it lends legitimacy to a system that is clearly illegitimate, even by its own standards. As a theoretical argument, I support this. I agree that revolutionary change is not going to happen through working with a system whose intransigence is the biggest obstacle. But I'm left with some questions when it comes to applying this theoretical argument to the reality of daily life. Especially knowing that the rights I'm working to protect are rights I would insist on in any revolutionary movement. What I understand is that the distinctions are not as clean and simple as they're often portrayed in the punk scene. While I can say that the government ought to be done away with, I also know that there are plenty of things it does that I would want to see preserved. Things get a little messy here.

A Cuban exile in Joan Didion's *Miami*, speaking on the options available to the exile community, says, “As time goes by I think that men who were unable to make choices are more right than those who made them. Because there are no clean choices.” It's true that no matter what the choices are, none of them seem quite right. The clean lines of right and wrong cannot be drawn easily. Rather than be paralyzed by this messiness, as the man in Didion's book is, I think it's important to make a choice, and recognize that compromises are made with every decision. Even though I don't support the government, or the political system that sustains it, I realize that in order to protect legal reproductive rights, it's necessary to engage with that political system. Though I have hesitations about the tactics involved, it's far more important to me to act now than to wait for easier decisions to present themselves.

...

write: PO Box 10013 Columbus, OH 43201 or jonstrange@hotmail.com



Last night the words of Robert Smith spoke to me. I know that may sound like an incredibly cheesy thing to say, but it's the plain-out truth. In some sigh-laden fit of sappiness, I—like so many of you I'm sure—turned to my record collection for a sort of solace. It always seems to do the trick. For better or for worse, music is the soundtrack to our lives. Yeah, I know, tell me something I don't know Patti. How to write and not say these hackneyed, trite things, ergh...

The Cure's *Head On the Door* album has been singing me to sleep these past few nights... or in some cases, I'll just lay there like a surrendered jellyfish and think about everything that has been going on in my life. An excellent time-killer (waster?), no? Sometimes it feels like half of my waking hours are spent in daydreamland. Just walking around, on the streetcar, lying in bed, while cooking, etc. The mish-mash of thoughts having a tea party inside my head are enough to make you want to sleep most of the day away. For them weebegone moments (hours, days, weeks, years...) might I recommend listening to the song "All Dressed Up In Dreams" by The 6ths, Mary Timony-style, over and over until the CD player gets all nice and toasty. Actually, the Dean Wareham ditty which follows that one is an absolute killer as well. Oh hell's bells—*Wasp's Nests* by The 6THS. There you go. Fuck non-endorsement. Fuck the safety net. Fuck this charming outbreak of fruitflies in my apartment. As one of my favorite (and that is favorite with a "u", eh please eh?) cartoon characters would say: AUGHHH!

Lately I've been feeling this real nostalgia for the '80s. And it's not so typical as wanting to sit down and watch the films of John Hughes back to back. Although I would like to do that too. 5:17 told me an interesting rumor recently—that our aforementioned movie-hero of the '80s deliberately did not create any likable male characters. To which our posse retorted immediately with cries of "Ducky!" and "Ferris Bueller!" However, Eric Stoltz' character=denied. What a boob. There's got to be college courses out there on this shit. If they (I think it was UCLA?) can dedicate a course strictly to the films of Keanu Reeves, then anybody can do anything. Like, gag me with a spoon and choke me with a fork already. Part of this feeling is nostalgia, but another part of me looks at that particular decade juxtaposed against this one in a pseudo-analytical way. Pseudo because it's just a smidge overwhelming to compare the contents of two (almost) whole decades. Duh! One of the things which I'm trying to grasp is why the '80s left such a resonance with me, whereas the '90s seem to lack some sort of... something. Yeah. Sorry—I attribute my lack of articulation/the English language to the stifling weather outside. I swear, the city smells like a big ol' stale barnyard fart these days. It is right grody.

Now this may sound odd/un-punk/lame, but I kind of miss the sheer idolatry of the music scene when I was yet another depressed teen. (Hey cool, I like it when things rhyme by accident, heh.) In fact, that way of thinking is probably the antithesis to the supposed ideals of accessibility within the indie/punk community today. But even those ideals are a bit of a sham, clouded in the mist of sweaty boys and Bryl Creem. Take me, for instance, at the Magnetic Fields show not more than a week ago. How excellent was that evening. Like a lime Italian soda, t'was ree-freshing! Beautifully evocative popsongs that would make even Randy Machoman Savage get a little dewy-eyed. My friends and I now have even bigger crushes on Stephen Merritt and Claudia Gonson! There were so great. And yet for some damn-fool reason, I could not work up the gumption to tell them that after the show. There they were, just shootin' the shit on the bumper of their van, as I oh-so nonchalantly strolled on by stealing sideways glances. Then with a quick draw on the bike-lock key, I busted that thing open and pedaled away as fast as my little chicken legs would take me. On my bike and in awe of the band, I felt like a million bucks. Hehe, sentez-vous la fromage ici? And what exactly is the point of this long-winded reminiscence you might ask? Well, I guess just that sometimes it's nice to have your geeky (but sweet) fangirl/boy days, as opposed to being a scenester whore who has to share tour stories with everybody who is anybody and the rest can go to hell. There is something to be said for silent admiration sometimes, and not potentially creeping out those you admire. Maybe that's just the polite Canuck in me talking here (haha, yeah right).

The '80s were a funny time with regard to the second wave of new wave. (Shannon Doherty in that dancin' movie with Sarah Jessica Parker: "Ohmigod, he called me 'punk'! That's almost as good as NEW WAVE!") I honestly think that part of what made all these bands so alluring is the fact that they were so fucking unattainable. I suppose that theory could be ascribed to many things in life. The whole notion of the faraway and exotic vs. the local and mundane. I mean, hey, if you got to see thee Mozzer at your local fave diner everyday, scarfin' back the pork potpies and sipping prune nectar, somehow me thinks it would be just a mite disappointing. It'd be like "Oh, that guy used to play in this band that got kind of big. Ass'ole." Haha!

Ohhh, to be a terrible teen again who used to pore over every single issue of *Star Hits* magazine, which I bought religiously. Does anybody out there remember that one? It was such a great mag!! Quintessential "reading" (the best thing about *Star Hits* was the pictures which I subsequently plastered my bedroom walls with) material for all of the sullen black-clad kids when I was in grade/high school. They even had this rad section called "RSVP" which, as you can probably surmise, was this cool listing of penpal ads—similar to the meat market at the back of *MRR*, except less punk and mo' goth. This was a free service to bring the freaks—our terminology of choice back then—together I guess. All you had to do was send in your little bitty and if you were one of the special chosen ones, it got printed. Suffice to say, I was thrilled to skittles when they printed my ad circa '87. It went a little something like this: "Do you love to blare your stereo louder than bombs? Are you caught in a bizarre love triangle? If so, please write to The Girl With the Thorn In Her Side at 14 Loyalist bla bla bla..." I've forgotten a line or two in there, but I'm sure you get the dorkgist of it all. My

parents could not understand why their "supermailbox" (suburban invention) was suddenly flooded with weird-lookin' mail for their weird-lookin' middle daughter. I must have received well over 100 responses or so from that one funny ad. At age 13 I thought I was some pretty hot shit to have gotten that printed in *Star Hits*. Although my dear friend Matty wins for having gone to a Peter Murphy concert at age 11(!), only to see Bauhaus on their cashcow tour a decade later. As a certain claim to Canadian shame would sing, "Isn't it ironic?" Yes indeed. Ooooooh, love to love ya bay-bee. Bye bye!

...

Patti Kim, Box 68568, 360A Bloor St.W, Toronto ON, M5S 1X1
Canada or fhabzine@interlog.com



Columns

Sarah was very beautiful and very smart. She was also very rich. When she graduated high school, she had her pick of the best universities and colleges.

She chose a small private school in Vermont called Bennington. It had the distinction—possibly still does—of being the most expensive college in the country. It also had an excellent reputation, and since money was no problem, her parents were happy to send her there.

Bennington had a program that required her to spend a semester away from school working in a field related to her major. I don't remember what her major was—probably something like sociology—but for her work study, she decided to be a nude dancer in New York City. This being the 1970s, nobody batted an eye.

Up until then Sarah had led a pretty sheltered life. She thought it would help her to learn about herself to spend some time on the seamier side of things. She was kind of a hippie, kind of left wing, and, of course, didn't want to judge people because of their professions or lifestyles.

Sarah loved her new job. Like most women, she was sick of being ogled and catcalled and treated like an object. True, she was still being ogled and catcalled and treated like an object, but now she was getting paid a lot of money for it.

She loved feeling in control. She loved wagging her tits in front of a room full of losers and watching the expressions on the guys' faces, like dogs begging desperately for a bone but suspecting they were more likely to get a good kicking.

But it was hard work, both physically and emotionally, and the hours were long. Most of the girls did coke or speed to keep their energy up. When they'd get off work at 4 a.m., they'd keep on partying till mid-morn-

ing, and then they'd need something to calm them down and help them sleep. Heroin filled the bill nicely.

Sarah had done her share of drugs, but nothing like this. She didn't want to be a snob, though, so she went along with the crowd. There was a sharp little dude from Harlem called Two Eyes—how he got that name, nobody seemed to know—who would stop by two or three times a night to make sure the girls had whatever they needed.

Sarah was making plenty of money, but soon the drugs were eating up all of it. She asked her parents to send her more, but it was no dice. They were already none too happy about paying Bennington 12 grand a year (about \$30,000 in today's money) for their daughter to dance in a sex club.

She learned that most of the girls were supplementing their income by turning tricks, and that Two Eyes would be happy to set her up in business too. You can probably guess the rest. By the time she was supposed to go back to Bennington, Sarah was a prostitute and a heroin addict. On the bright side, she had a semester's college credit to show for it.

She sort of forgot to go back to school, and carried on in New York until a serious OD put her in the hospital. Her parents rescued her, brought her home to Michigan, and put in her rehab. Years later, she went back to college and became a lawyer, which you may or may not regard as a happy ending.

Fast forward to the mid-'90s, and I'm visiting a friend at Harvard. She hates it there and keeps threatening to quit. Her parents are going nuts: They've got a second mortgage on the house to pay for their daughter to attend one of the world's best universities, but she's bored. She'd rather hitchhike to California or get into body piercing or something.

I go up to her room. Six kids are lounging around. A couple of them are sprawled out on the floor, others are falling halfway out of chairs. Turns out they're all on heroin.

I do a little arithmetic. Six sets of parents are forking out 30 grand a year each for their little darlings to sit around being junkies. For about the eight millionth time, I thank my lucky stars that I never had kids.

Now here we are in the late '90s, and I'm at one of my favorite Britpop-indie dance clubs. It's a mixed crowd, predominantly gay, but because the music and clothes are trendy, it attracts its share of straights and tourists.

Tonight a gaggle of American college students have found their way in. Even without the Ivy League logos some of them are sporting, you can tell where they're coming from. No summer jobs for this bunch; obviously Mommy and Daddy had forked over for the kids to spend their holidays in London.

At least they're not on heroin, I think to myself, but a few minutes later, I'm wishing they were. Large, large doses of it, in fact.

Several of them are wearing those stupid raver hats, but as soon as they get a few beers in them, they start acting like punks, or the way they think punks are supposed to act. You know the kind: The jocks who show up at their first punk gig thinking the idea is to smash into and knock down as many people as possible.

These kids are no jocks, or if they are, it's probably more along the lines of water polo or lacrosse than football or basketball. And they're not brutal or hostile, just stupid and oblivious to everyone besides themselves.

After the biggest one has crashed into me for the third or fourth time, I'm thinking about dealing with it the way I've been known to at punk gigs:

A quick, sneaky boot or fist as they go past, hopefully enough to send them sprawling on their ass.

For a bunch of reasons I don't do it: 1) this is a dance club, not a punk gig—violence of any kind is almost unheard of; 2) this person is way bigger than me; 3) this person has a lot of friends; 4) this person is a girl.

Of all the reasons for not clobbering the jerk, Number four seems like the flimsiest. If we're living in an egalitarian age, or at least trying to, why should we treat girls differently than boys?

Yet something still seems terribly wrong about hitting a girl, no matter how big of an asshole she's being. It's the way I was brought up, no doubt. Somehow I think this girl knows she can get away with murder, partly because she's a girl, partly because she's rich, maybe most of all because nobody has ever told her she can't do whatever the fuck she wants.

There was a famous exchange between Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald, where Hemingway was criticizing Fitzgerald for sucking up to the wealthy and famous. Fitzgerald claimed he was only fascinated by the rich because, as he put it, "They're different from you and me." "Yeah," Hemingway retorted, "they have more money."

Hemingway may have had a point, but Fitzgerald had more of one. The rich are different. Not just the rich, but the upper-middle classes as well. There's a built-in assurance, a self-confidence, that comes from never having to worry about where your next meal or your next car or your next year's college tuition is coming from.

It's not unusual for poor and working class people to become rich, but you can almost always tell them apart from people who were born that way. There's a certain insecurity, an edginess, that comes from remembering what it's like to have no money and fearing you might end up that way again.

Right now I've got more money than I ever had in my life. Some of you might call me rich, though upper-middle class would be more accurate. Yet I'm still scared I'll end up working at McDonald's or sleeping in an alley. It's irrational, I know, but that doesn't make the feeling any less real.

Unlike Sarah, unlike those Harvard junkies, I don't have the sense of certainty and self-confidence that would let me throw my life away and still think I (or my parents) could pick up the pieces. Even though I've met rich and famous people, been to exclusive parties, had my picture in the papers and magazines, I still feel like a gate-crasher, like a fraud who's sure to be found out one of these days.

I think we all feel like that to some extent. Half the rich kids I meet are desperate to be accepted into some subculture or underclass. They seem just as ashamed of their privileged backgrounds as I was of my underprivileged one.

Those Ivy League kids making a nuisance of themselves at the dance club probably thought they were being cool, were probably trying to fit into what they saw as the London hipster underground. Yeah, they made life a misery for those of us who were there to dance, but when it comes down to it, they just didn't know any better.

Just like I didn't know any better when I showed up at college wearing a black leather jacket and a thuglike sneer. I thought I was being rejected for being poor, but I would learn later that I was far from being the poorest person there. The real reason I was being rejected by the other kids was that I was rejecting them as well.

I was so defensive, so insecure, that I decided anyone with more money, anyone better dressed than me, must automatically be a bastard. It would be years before I would learn that working class people are just as capable of being bastards, that there are far more vital ways to judge a person than where they came from or how much money their parents have.

But like many of life's lessons, it's one that needs to be learned over and over again. Once you've formed the habit of seeing the world in certain ways, it's so hard to break it. The old prejudices keep coming back, in ever more sneaky and subtle forms.

If I needed any proof of that, I need only look at myself. I started out this column with much of my old attitude in full effect: I was angry and jealous that other people seemed to have had an easier time of it than I had. I should know better by now, I should have known better years ago.

Ironically, I'm often a target of anger and jealousy myself, thanks to the success I had with Lookout Records. People assume that I must be decadent and corrupt simply because I have more money than they do. So here I am turning my nose up at one set of people because I assume they're rich, and having the same thing done to me by other, equally prejudiced people.

Well, I probably had it coming, and anyway, I don't mind all that much. I'm finally arriving at that stage in life where I can feel secure in myself, knowing that I've done the best I could regardless of whatever limitations or advantages I grew up with.

Yes, I'll always be a little afraid that my manners or my dress sense or my ability to make small talk won't be quite up to snuff. Yes, I'll always be a little worried that one morning I'll wake up and find out this has all been a dream, that I'm due back on the assembly line in Detroit. Or worse, that the assembly line has been shut down and I'm out of a job.

As the subtitle of a Herzog movie had it, "Fear eats the soul," and I've found plenty of things in life to be afraid of. Some of them were thrown at me by where I was born, the kind of family I had, by being smaller and weaker and more effeminate than the kids I grew up with. Others were completely self-induced.

But we're all born with various fears and handicaps, and acquire more along the way. At the risk of sounding flippant or patronizing, that's what makes life interesting. The crucial thing is what we do about them. Every so often, I realize all over again just how much I still have to learn about myself and the world around me. I hope I go on having those kind of realizations for as long as I live.

...

In case you're wondering, I still do listen to music, and here are some of the best things I've heard or seen lately: Sleater-Kinney, who are brilliant all around, and have one of the best drummers in punk rock, or any other kind of rock, for that matter. Elliott Smith, who's simply a genius, though I wonder why he keeps wearing that wool hat even when it's 90 degrees out. The Weakerthans, who in John K. Samson have a singer-songwriter who can bring tears to the eyes of even a jaded fool such as myself. Bis, who are bringing back some of the best energy from the '80s new wave scene and improving on it. Snuff, amazing for the way they can make old fashioned punk rock sound as fresh and exciting as if it were invented yesterday. Wat Tyler, England's greatest cabaret act-cum-punk band, and who

deserve their own nightly variety show. The Beastie Boys, whom I'd never cared for before, but who not only dissed The Prodigy for their "Smack My Bitch Up" song, but then proceeded to blow them off stage and into the next county. Most of all, New Order, who showed the young folks how it's done by effortlessly and flawlessly running through their own hits before turning 40,000 people into blithering masses of jelly with four of the greatest Joy Division classics. A perfect end to a pretty damn good summer.



At around the same time my brother started High School in the early '80s, we both started noticing a sudden surge in television commercials for a book called *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*. The commercial asked several questions that most of us begin asking at about that age: *Why do good people suffer? Can you really achieve your goals? How can we utilize our individual mental capacities to their full potential?* Following each question, a small footnote would appear on the bottom of the screen that usually said something to the effect of "See Page 183."

My brother was a predominantly physical yet somehow scholastic type who was always up for a good challenge, so he bought the book. Initially, we were under the impression that *Dianetics* had been written by some kind of psychotherapist, but not long after, we discovered that the author was a science fiction writer by the name of L. Ron Hubbard. My brother questioned the validity of his authority on mental health, but started reading the book anyway. If nothing else, we had fun waiting for the commercials to come on with the book on our laps.

About a month later, my parents started having discussions with my brother about the book. They were concerned that Hubbard may be the leader of a mind control group and were worried about the effect that the "Church of Scientology" might have on him. He confessed to feeling a bit disconcerted about the book; that it seemed to be manipulating his feelings in an underhanded way. So even though a classmate from school asked that he borrow the book when my brother was done with it, he decided to throw it away. When I asked my brother why, he said it was "Satanic." I said I still wanted to read it.

By the time we first heard about the Church of Scientology, Lafayette Ron Hubbard had already fallen into total obscurity before dying from a fatal stroke in 1986. Born in 1911, Hubbard was for the most part raised in Montana. Scientologists will tell you that Hubbard was treated to life on a wealthy cattle ranch owned by his grandfather, but other sources have proven that he was actually the son of a Navy Officer. After dropping out of George Washington University where he studied molecular physics,

Hubbard began a career in science fiction writing that was temporarily sidetracked by his own Navy stint during World War II. Scientologists will tell you he was a "decorated" war hero who was crippled and blinded in war only to be prodigiously cured by Scientology. Detractors claim that his service was quite uneventful. The official war records paint a placid portrait of Hubbard; sure enough, his active service ended after a duodenal ulcer was detected. There's no documented mention of any miracles.

When Hubbard initially wrote *Dianetics* in the 1950s, the philosophy he'd created was an innocuous mix of science fiction, religious theology, and physics. Its exponents were seemingly harmless: He argued that unhappiness and lack of motivation were due to mental aberrations caused by early conscious and subconscious trauma. He introduced a treatment called "auditing" or "scientological clearing," meant to retrieve the mind back from these painful incidents.

As time went on, however, the philosophy expanded. The subconscious reaction to these traumas were called "engrams." Engrams could be removed only by an invention called the "Hubbard Electrometer"—or "E-Meter," for short—a complicated machine designed to measure electrical changes in the skin and, Hubbard claimed, to "clear" these traumas. And then it got stranger. In the 1960s, Hubbard added the idea that the human body was actually inhabited by what he called "thetans"—spirits that were banished to the earth by an intergalactic ruler named Xenu. Previously, engram auditing was simple and cheap. But as knowledge of these thetans came to light, so did new levels of auditing. According to a story in *Time* some years ago, regular auditing cost about \$500 an hour. To rid yourself of BT's (Body Thetans) however, the auditing would require several months and anywhere between \$17,010 and \$25,600. The final stage of Scientology clearing would come to cost another \$11,140 plus accommodations, but no one can say exactly what happens at that point—there are no known defectors from this stage.

Perhaps the most popular rumor concerning Scientology's church-status, despite the fact that there is no actual doctrine or expressed belief in any sort of God, is the one where L. Ron Hubbard explains to a close friend his frustration with science fiction writing. "Why are you wasting your time with science fiction?" the friend supposedly advised him. "We both know the best-selling book ever is the *Bible*. Hell, if you really wanna be rich, you should start a religion."

I've always been fascinated by religious cults. In Junior High, I read a lot about the Rosicrucians, the Church of Satan, and the Moonies. (As an aside, *Crazy For God*—an autobiographical treatise by an ex-Moonie—is one of the most entertaining reads I've yet encountered on the subject.) In 1991, I dragged my friend Bill and his girlfriend Michelle to the Church of Scientology in Times Square. At the time, they'd literally taken the neighborhood over with *Dianetics* tables and free "Personality Test" offers. I figured I'd take them up on it.

We all decided to take the test. For the most part, it felt like a Scantron final exam from High School: There were two hundred questions, each of which you'd answer with "yes," "uncertain," or "no." (A few of the questions were: Are you a slow eater? Do children irritate you? And my personal favorite: Do you browse through railway timetables, directories, or dictionaries just for pleasure? My answers: No, No, and Yes.) By question #40, I was already feeling fucked with. I remember thinking that most of

these questions were asking the same thing but had been worded differently to confuse me. I finished the test as best I could.

Bill and Michelle finished their tests in about the same time I did. We sat in a drab-white waiting room while the results came in via computer. I was the first one to be called in by the Evaluator.

The first thing I noticed about the room where my evaluation would be taking place was a full-length wall mirror on my left side. It was the kind of thing you'd see in a police interrogation scene at the movies. In fact, I couldn't help but feel I was being watched while I took my seat and laughed at the Evaluator's dry welcome joke. He held my test results tautly, asked me what I did for a living, and began to explain some of Scientology's basic tenets. I asked him whether or not Scientology was really a "church."

"We're a metaphysical organization," he responded.

"Do you believe in God?" I asked.

"Some of us do," he said, "and some of us don't."

"Then what exactly qualifies you as a church and why do you have a crucifix on the building?"

"Well," he stammered, "you came in, didn't you?"

I agreed and he continued. He took out a graph called the *Oxford Capacity Analysis*. On one side of the evaluation were a list of characteristics—stable, happy, composed, active, appreciative, and so on. On the other side was a list of degrees to which one may possess these qualities—desirable, normal, and "unacceptable state." The majority of the points on my graph were normal, but the Evaluator ignored those and went for my weak points right away.

"This ring around point B indicates that your level of happiness is unstable," he said. "You have periods of being happy and cheerful, followed by periods of depression and dejection."

Again I agreed.

"You're a bit withdrawn. Your inability to communicate freely and relaxedly will prevent you from making friends and from progressing in your work. Scientology can help you with that."

I folded my hands and told him that I was still unsure about this and that I'd have to come back after I'd read some more about the church. He pressured me to take an introductory course to the philosophy and invited me to a birthday party they were throwing for Hubbard the following week, but I declined. I shook his hand, put my backpack on, and walked out of the building.

Michelle was waiting outside. Bill decided to skip the evaluation after Michelle pulled him into the hallway and showed him a copy of her own graph, followed by an interesting Evaluator's "script"—fresh from the church's laser printer. I recognized much of the script from my own conversation and cringed at its silent instructions: "Don't bother much with his high points," it read. "If he queries, then tell him it's the low ones that are the cause of his troubles and that these can be changed. If several are high, you can add that because of these it will be easier for him that most people, to use Scientology to improve with."

Even while we rode on the F-train home, I still felt on guard, as if they'd followed me out. I've had full-on conversations with Moonies in their chapel and lived in Hare Krishna temples, but I've never felt so authentically frightened by any other "religious" group. Michelle let me keep her

evaluation, which I've somehow managed to hold onto over the years. I read the end of the script and shuddered.

"The Evaluator now leans back and says, 'That's it.' *Incomer is hanging on ropes. If Incomer says anything like, 'What can I do about it?' Evaluator says, 'That is very commendable. A good point in your favor, wanting to do something about it. Look, I'm technical staff here. I don't have anything to do with sales or courses, but if you'd like a confidential tip, there are all sorts of courses and services going on here all the time. Your best bet would be to take one of the beginning services and discover what Scientology can offer you. This will save you from getting involved. Go and see that lady over there and tell her you only want one of the beginning services so you can find out what Scientology is all about.'*"

A few years later, I walked by a Scientology table in Hollywood and struck up a conversation with its curator. He handed me a book called *The Way To Happiness* and invited me in for a Personality Test. This time, I said I was busy and kept walking—but not before taking the book, of course. I'd heard about this primer before; it was Hubbard's stab at creating society's first authoritative non-religious moral code.

Its pages are filled with commandments of sort: Take care of yourself. Don't be promiscuous. Do not murder. And do not do anything illegal. By following these and other precepts, Hubbard claims, society will function in a way designed for human happiness—which sounds good enough. Still, there's no mention of any Body Thetans. No sign of engrams. And considering they're getting all of the tax-exempt benefits of a church, why should they be allowed to pump out pages of literature that has no actual basis in religion at all? "The way to happiness is a high-speed road to those who know where the edges are," Hubbard concludes. "You're the driver. Fare well."



For every complex problem there is always a simple solution. And it is wrong.

—H.L. Mencken

We are in denial. As a human culture and punk subculture we deny our utmost potential for long-term survival through ecologically sustainable means. I've previously pointed out how with our particularly wasteful, surplus economy—where we overproduce goods, namely food, that ensure our expansion as an over-consuming populace—we face further strife. The reality is that our growth continues with, at best, stop-gap measures used to solve the problem of exponential population growth.

Stop-gap measures, such as smoking a joint to relax instead of not being stressed in the first place, can lead to higher stresses if adopted as

long-term solutions. Crime rises? Put more cops on the street. People are starving in Third World economies? Produce more food and ship it over there. Government is oppressive? Protest the government. Meat is tainted with hormones and cruel methods of breeding? Don't eat meat.

And so on.

Our culture's repeated, knee-jerk tendencies suggest that we don't want long-term, stable solutions. They often require more work, thought and enactment, and perhaps most notably, new ways to address old problems rob the comfort of how we look at issues now. An example: "I'll quit smoking later. It's not as harmful to me now." Procrastinating is much easier than simply stopping.

I pointed to thinkers like Paul Hawken who suggests we find constructive ways to reuse our waste rather than merely resorting to recycling, especially from a large, corporate scale. I pointed to Howard Kunstler who recommends we recreate our urban communities around pedestrian traffic, not put more car lanes, and in effect, more traffic into areas where our kids play. Kunstler says to move business back into urban centers so mixed-incomes coexist rather than segregate into urban and suburban communities.

The naysayers came back and said that these people are really suggesting to kowtow to corporate and bureaucratic whim (never mind we do anyway), and that these solutions are either improbable or just another guise for profitability for the economic elite. Instead of actually trying them out, from the activist standpoint it is much easier to shoot them down without much critical examination and to keep on working traditional activist methods. We're safe with the status quo victimizing us, and therefore guiding our responses, because from that vantage point we receive sympathy and accolades from our friends. In fact, we've developed a marginal support network (punk) out of this behavior, and we've invested too much into it at this point to realize it may be all for absolute shit.

Rather than join traditional thinkers, such as punks, who settle for this kind of reactive mentality, I'm going to offer another direction of thought and critical examination that punk rock appears at odds with: that is the spiritual direction we follow as scene luminaries and fans.

Stressors

Stress is known to be a probable cause of cancer. As two-dimensional, cause-and-effect systems, corporations, governments, businesses, even the punk or D.I.Y. systems, all have the potential for dysfunction, to breed illnesses that halt systematic productivity, maybe even kill it. Childcare workers, for instance, know about stress. They feel the stress in the hearts and minds of themselves and the children they teach as each day goes by, as new children bring new crises, as management is cold and unfriendly, as the weekly paycheck barely pays the bills, if at all. At one childcare place I worked, some caregivers were on welfare despite being employed by a service agency for those with low-incomes. Stress existed not because the people were flawed, despite how convenient it was to blame particular individuals, but rather, stress exists in workplaces because of criteria that operate on dynamic tension.

A particular bureaucracy I worked for, the City of Reno, was habitually unclear about whose responsibility it was to maintain the program I helped run. When decisions were alleged to be made, such as whether to continue offering service to certain schools, it was up to the workers to inform parents of changes. This caused stress for us because we were unwittingly unin-

formed and were forced to assume responsibility from an ignorant vantage point. It caused stress for parents who then had to make arrangements based on incomplete information. And it caused stress for higher-ups at the City who were forced to contend with parent complaints. Though this was a particular cycle of stress, the City appeared to function under this kind of pattern without acknowledgment toward any problem. The tension was apparent. It bred discontentment, instability and high turnover in employment.

A broader example is America's predominant system: Our federal government. The three main branches of government were set up to function at a constant state of checks and balances, each branch overriding the next in its action. If we delve deeper into the psyche of this system, into the lives of common Americans, those the system governs, we don't find "checks and balances." We find stress. We find people walking around beating the shit out of each other, we find theft, rape, hatred, drugs, shootings, murder, scandals, gossip and a shrinking portion of society that has monetary stability, and along with that, their own stress. We find we really don't like each other much. Sure there are pleasantries in life; often, however, these too are built on a similar, competing and consumed energies.

Why isn't anything done about this?

We try. But, a dysfunctional system can exist in an unhealthy state if it stabilizes its stresses. That's where those stop-gap measures come in. The system's members may live an unhealthy life, but if it's a constant we tend to be content in our short-term resilience. We're not being decimated at this point so there's no immediate urgency to fix things proper. When it comes down to it that's what American history has been about, alleviating stresses with more in the way of short-term solutions that have ultimately lead us to where we are now.

The reality of course is that our stress isn't as stable as the illusion purports. We aren't focusing on America's long-term view of growth and expansion, for example. As long as there's land in Montana for sale, all is well. If crime gets out of hand, more cops equals more jobs. America, punk class-theorists included, is proud of its working heritage after all.

Though I got fired from the City job, I recently passed by City of Reno "Summer of Fun" camp counselors at a park. They were yelling, probably out of liability concerns, at the children they were caring for. The kids were climbing on small boulders in the park. When I worked for the City, I watched in nervous anticipation as kids climbed trees, one all the way up, about two stories high, as the tree bent dangerously to support his weight. To me, this kind of experience was integral to lessons children must learn on their own. Tree climbing in particular was an excellent exercise in dexterity and upper-body muscle development — and risk taking. My view, however, is ultimately what got me fired. Rather than follow bureaucratic protocol, I emphasized what I considered to be a healthy, proactive environment, one free of stress for the kids.

Precious Prophets

Stress means certain death for some: Cancer, heart malfunction, nervous breakdowns, psychological disorders, violence and so on. Other survival mechanisms kick in hopefully before we say good night one final time. Curiously, what happens is we often look outward for stress relief rather than inward. People find prophets to tell them how to cope with life's stresses. It's not an exaggeration to point to death-row prisoners who find Jesus.

When things don't look so hot, it is prophets (and their slogans) that save us from damnation.

Similar options aren't always limitless for disadvantaged youth. For the kids I grew up around, the obvious answer was in rebellion against what we saw as utter bullshit: The rest of the world. This behavior is a symptom of the disillusioned. Punk being rebellious in nature provides for jaded 14-year-olds an escape just as Jesus does for those who take that route to salvation.

It's no wonder to me why people make a cheap, convenient analogy of punk being a religion. The obvious assertion is that punk fulfills the same role in the lives of punkers as, for example, Christianity fulfills certain expectations in the lives of Christians. I wrote in an old column how religion and punk have crossed paths. For certain, this will continue. But the reason for why punk and religion meet common ground needs exploring.

Prophets tell us how to live, and punk as rebellion has certainly provided us with more than its share of prophets. There's the Ray Capps, Ian Mackayes, Tim Yohannans (then and now because he successfully molded those who are following his mission since his passing) who all had something to contribute about how to live certain lifestyles. What excludes many punks from true prophet status is that they don't claim to receive their information divinely (with, perhaps, the exception of our Krishna comrades). That doesn't stop most of them from behaving like they do, though.

Extending the point, punk's prophets aren't always tangible figures of influence. Much like how Jesus has become not just a keeper of higher spiritual and moral wisdom, but rather a way of life, our prophetic deities exist as ideological punk byproduct: the music, the magazines, the clubs and—seldomly acknowledged without irony toward its religious overtone—The Message. When people write to fanzines asserting “what punk is about” (every punk, by default, automatically knows this), they're talking about The Message as they see it. Just like every Christian I've ever talked with about his or her beliefs.

Just as it's mostly pointless to argue with street preachers and G.O.P. supporters, it's often wasted energy to attempt critical dialogue with a diehard punker not just because most don't possess skills to engage in thoughtful critique. Moreover, few acknowledge how the militant behavior of some punks, straightedgers, anarchists and/or vegans resembles the Christian Crusaders of the Middle Ages. It stems from assuming a path of correctness to rigidly enforcing it. Punk's gospel messengers have shown time and again what is and is not appropriate when living a punk-associated lifestyle. Some take it to the extreme by putting it onto others. Some put it onto themselves. Every good punk knows scenesters who stress themselves devoting their energy to the punk message.

Being blinded by righteousness, as we all assume those evil religionists are, we tend to forget that in what we criticize we so often ignore of ourselves. Punk is no different than Judaism, for instance, in its attempt to save who we are as individuals, to enlighten us on an assumed, better path because the one we're currently on is unhealthy. We find we need salvation.

As punk's creed often goes, we are victims of the system. Punk is partially right. Its fault is getting caught up in identity and where emphasis should be placed. When largely middle-class, white kids feel like they don't have an identity, they often just pick one, or many. Identities are fashionable especially when we can gain sympathy from them. If a 16-year-old girl feeling jaded by her life becomes punk rock, spikes her hair, listens to abrasive

music and hangs out with other punks, she inevitably gets harassed by her parents and cops. Viola! Oppression has set in. When she picks up a punk fanzine or CD, the media of the message, she learns just how oppressed she is. She has then found her God to save and reaffirm her lost soul.

The Rhetoric of The Oppressed

Tim Yohannan should be commended for saving souls. He was indirectly instrumental in saving mine when I was 16. Tim elegantly and diligently is able to articulate a view that, essentially, outwardly blames higher, more monstrous entities for society's ills. On its surface he (and for that matter, most anarchists, communists, socialists and punks) is correct. There's no doubt at all that big business is responsible for wastefulness, greed, corruption and disregard for human dignity. It's not hard to see that because it's in our faces in one way or another at every moment of each day. Tim not only devoted his lifestyle to criticizing how common people were treated, but he formulated for others ways to live that separated us from these evil entities.

Similarly, when *Punk Planet* prints an article eulogizing the victim of an illegal tagging lifestyle, it too is endorsing the mentality of that victim. The view puts reactive expression—to what boils down to crummy, dissatisfying lives that so many of us lead—as the way to further the flow of knowledge. The article was one of many in nearly every issue that in one way or another addresses the voice of the voiceless. The expression of the oppressed voice is what's important, *Punk Planet* states. It is righteous salvation disguised as pushing the flow of knowledge. Transcendent release is found in this expression. Just like going to church.

The problem with prophet-minded expression is that it implies powerlessness of the individual, first of all, and secondly that responding or reacting to that state, in this case through punk rock, is how to transform the condition we find ourselves in. Punk admittedly does this far less literally than religionists do. Its pretext, though, implies the victim position, and it actively encourages working beyond that even if it's unclear at times which direction that effort should pursue. The distorted edge, one of punk's primary characteristics, translates metaphorical angst appropriately: “We are pissed off!” the music says. The edge doesn't mask the victim mentality; instead, it pursues it. Why else cry, bleat, scream and moan about how much pain we're in? Obviously it's therapeutic, and if we're not whining the more articulate among us will resort to a more academic, even challenging level of discourse or expression (there's very little true dialogue in punk). Even on that level it's easy to examine how much art we produce that assumes a victim's stance. It is found in lyrics, artwork, writing and web pages.

I've assumed the role of a victim for much of my life. I will probably continue to when I feel gloomy and unchecked. Coming to grips with what this means for me and analyzing victim behavior in myself, my friends, and on an even broader scale, our culture at large, is a much more important story.

It's a paradox, but we are victims of a badly-formed cultural system. We are acting out behaviorally in response to how we've reared ourselves. Without much wit we wallow in the victim status usually under the guidance of those who claim to have better answers on how to live properly. Wallowing in this status with external directives prevents viewing the rest of the world with open eyes, where things might become a little more clear,

where the view is potentially brighter, where we see how the rest of the world is acting much like the rest of us: under righteous impudence, each of us maximizing our agendas as survival mechanisms.

Vision

It is easy to fall into preexisting, mapped-out systems—marginal, mainstream or otherwise. Social systems speak to us, help us shape who we are and guide us to identify who we want to become. With punk in particular, its attractiveness is with like minds or with those who challenge us into fulfilling a portion of the punk social strata. Straightedge preachers were finding a niche, pursuing a vision away from or in reaction to the drunken mentality that dominated part of punk. Straightedge forefathers of the early '80s now see how their vision has been distorted and blurred. The stress that caused their view to flourish through today has not been alleviated despite straightedge's popularity being far greater now than ever. Adopting a militant edge to being straight has in fact caused further stress and stratification within the punk and hardcore community's confines.

This kind of vision, a knee-jerk reaction to a larger way of life, means that the straightedge vision's clarity was not born from proactive ideas. The view never addressed what was wrong with the existing way of being punk:

Why people drink and do drugs in the first place. Although just saying no to drugs is a reductionist way to reach youngsters and easily-swayed punks, straightedge has proven to be ineffective to ultimately influence a healthy way of life, especially when the message is conveyed with fists and knives.

Likewise, punk in general fails to enrich humans and the world at large because it too approaches its unfocused vision in much the same way. Perhaps placing a higher expectation on punk is an error. I learned early on in punk endeavors that stepping outside of what punk offers and looking in critically is only a way for me to lose friends, make enemies and in the end, make my life more amusing. I could laugh for only so long.

I vividly remember attending a punk meeting of what was called Reno's punk collective. Everything I said was ridiculed or dismissed. I was accused of being negative—an odd accusation from something calling itself punk—because I disagreed with the politics of how a certain show was being handled. Simply, my view didn't matter, eventually wasn't welcomed and things would go on despite my concerns.

I went from feeling like the narrator of Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* to realizing, ultimately, my place was not in punk under group-identity criteria. For my sake, I had always refused to identify as punk even when I was heavily immersed in living as one. This position allowed me to assume I was more objective. I found I was ultimately much more effective as a human asking critical questions in every aspect of my life.

A few years later, I still have many questions and even fewer answers. Realizing the limitations of the victim mentality, despite the superficial rewards it offers, is in the end limiting and defeating. We wear ourselves down with our depressed rhetoric and over-zealous, missionary-like behavior to these vague causes. This also holds true for those who simply buy and listen to the music and not much else. Those acts are about consuming energy just as much as producing it. Punk music fulfills a spiritual void for punk consumers.

So I ask: Is there something beyond current systems—corporate systems, welfare systems, government systems, punk systems, the D.I.Y. system... essentially all systems we currently live within—that helps us become people who feel content and secure about what the future holds? These systems as I've experienced them continue to create more tension on social and personal levels rather than simply taking care of our needs as a desperate culture. And I'm left wondering, if there is something else, what is it?

One source of inspiration I recently found was The Systems Thinking and Practice website (<http://www.orst.edu/instruct/stp/>) where this column's epigraph was borrowed from. The site's description of systems thinkers hit closer to home than any punk spillage I've encountered. It says:

"Systems thinkers:

• Recognize that no individual or group ever has all the answers. They believe that there are many 'truths' depending on past experiences and current perspectives. They value the insights of alternative points of view. For this reason, they are also good listeners and see dialogue as a valuable means of learning.

• Look for the hidden assumptions behind the way things are done in organizations... They realize that an investigation of assumptions is often a fruitful place to look when considering areas of leverage for change.

• Are critically reflective, regularly examining the mental models that influence how they understand the world and take action in it.

• Think holistically.

• Are metacognitive. They think about how they think. They are willing to disclose their thinking to others in a joint effort for increased understanding.

• Are life-long learners: Always driven by new questions, and finding joy in discovery and connections.

• Are playful and have a sense of humor, characteristics that are necessary for divergent thinking."

In other work I've discovered my life to be shaping up to new meanings. One profound realization is that my teachers, the people I learn and am inspired the most from, are all over 50. My mentors have recurrently talked about vision, all separate from one another and for varying reasons.

Since my influences aren't available to everyone, I choose Peter Senge and his book *The Fifth Discipline* as a more accessible resource. Senge articulates on paper the need for visions development. As a proponent of systems thinking, he says:

"Shared visions compel courage so naturally that people don't even realize the extent of their courage. Courage is simply doing whatever is needed in pursuit of the vision. In 1961, John Kennedy articulated a vision that had been emerging for many years...to have a man on the moon by the end of the decade...

"Vision paints the picture of what we want to create. Systems thinking reveals how we have created what we currently have... Vision becomes a living force only when people truly believe they can shape their future... I'll always remember a manager emerging from [a] session at one of the companies in our research program. When asked what he learned, he replied: 'I discovered that the reality we have is only one of several possible realities.'"

...

Punk as a system functions on dynamic tension, as opposed to shared energy or creative tension. Additionally, punk is at the whims of larger systems that determine its popularity, as recent drops in sales for punk products show. In order to work away from being susceptible to succumbing to outside, dominant markets detrimental to its stability and processes of evolution, punk will have to develop a lasting vision it can call its own. Without it, punk will continue as it has: Relatively stable in its competition, primarily a youth phenomenon, therapeutic on a self-serving level, profitable to a few and tension-ridden for many.

Without something more accessible to about what punk is, a refined sense of punk's nature and a broader significance away from personal identity, punk will fail to have a positive impact on the rest of the world. This is especially true when punk seems pretty good at alienating itself from most of society almost as a matter of policy. Maybe I write with a naïve mind not seeing that is where punk belongs: In the margins, below the rest of society, as a leader in victim- and angst-ridden expression. Punk certainly has prided itself in those areas.

Am I bothered by this? Not really. I've long ceased viewing punk as much more than what it really is. With a punk audience in mind, however, I keep brewing the still of this reality in order to conjure what can and should be expected from how we view the world with punk-jaded eyes. Though my views may be for some, especially those with so much emotional investment in punk, hard to swallow, it should be obvious I don't come from a place so foreign. On the other hand, I now know that surpassing simple youth angst is merely one phase of life. Figuring out who to be listening to is another. When somebody says to "keep your eyes open," it may be wise to pay attention. When they are *shouting* it, something else is going on. Perhaps at that point it's time to put attention elsewhere.

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Updates and other writings are here:

<http://users.intercomm.com/2ndguess/INDEX.HTM>

Or mail me at: PO Box 9382, Reno, NV 89507. Send a S.A.S.E. or stamp for a reply.



I may no longer be punk. This belated conclusion is now inescapable, and is weighing on my mind like the sweaty but-tocks of a pudgy electrician.

Why do I say this? Did I find myself listening to Kenny G? Was I explaining why screaming "Anarchy Now" is not properly in the liberal tradi-

tion to people in Mohawks while I was wearing a seersucker suit?

No. It isn't that bad. But it's close.

You see, I've listened to my new band's demo tape, several times now, and we do not sound even remotely punk. Now, make no mistake—I love punk, and listen to it all the time. Noise punk, emo, pop punk, electronic punk, folk punk, skronk punk, trad punk, ska punk—I love it all.

But I don't sound punk anymore. My new band sounds, well, normal. When we get hard we sound more like, I don't know, Faith No More than Fugazi. While irritating, I can deal with this, so long as it isn't too obvious. When we get weird, we sound more like Radiohead than Unwound. I can live with that, too, so long as we're weird on a regular basis. However, when we get poppy, and we're getting poppy more and more often, we sound more like (and this is really horrible) Gin Blossoms than NOFX. This is a total nightmare, and is entirely unacceptable. I want to slit my wrists. What happened to the jams that sounded like Mount Shasta, or the weird, Birthday Party-esque scream fests? The power chords?

They've all gone away.

And the worst part of all of this, beyond the fact that we no longer sound like any of my favorite bands, is that it's partially my fault. I wrote half the songs. So I can't blame this on someone else.

I must like this stuff.

But I don't like this stuff. I don't listen to any of it. So why am I sounding like I belong on MTV?

Can I be forgiven for sounding like Matchbox 20 when I hate Matchbox 20 with all my being and when I go home and listen to Shellac and Plastilina Mosh instead? Am I a musical hypocrite? Am I selling out subconsciously?

I'm confident that I'm not consciously trying to sound mainstream, but this stuff is sounding more and more mainstream every day, despite every effort to pull it back. The punkier songs are slowing down, the propulsive songs are getting heavier, and the pop songs are getting, well, even poppier. Could it be my age?

I am turning 30 in October, which may have something to do with it, I guess, except that (at this point) half the punkers I know are over 30, and age hasn't stopped Bad Religion or Steve Albini from sounding abrasive despite the fact that they're many years older than I am. And it isn't like the songs I write don't start off sounding pretty abrasive (in fact when I record them at home, they sound downright mean). But then, with the band, they begin to sound, I don't know...

Like rock 'n' roll.

And pretty good rock 'n' roll at that. Our singer sounds a bit like Stevie Wonder, our drummer thinks he's Stewart Copeland from the Police, our guitar player thinks he's in Dinosaur Jr., and I want to be David Sims of the Jesus Lizard.

Which of these things is not like the other?

Of course, David Sims is older than me by several years, was in Scratch Acid when I was in high school, and still sounds harder than anything I've ever concocted in my room, or in any of my bands (even the dearly departed Sirhan Duran, which had a set of hardcore Barry Manilow covers, but I digress).

I like the way we sound, and I still like listening to GREED by the Swans, so I must be developing some form of schizophrenia. How can I simultaneously get on stage and play some "hard rockin' tunes" and call myself a punk?

Maybe I can't.

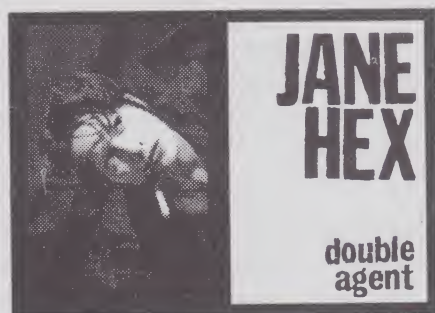
Maybe I'm suffering from the first stage of "expanding your horizons" disease. This is the well known affliction which undermines the careers of otherwise sane musicians, causing Paul Westerberg to go from the raw sound of the early Replacements to the sentimental country-rock tripe of "Achin' to Be." If I ever do a song as bad as "Achin' to Be," I want someone to shoot me.

I used to be bald. Now I have a perfect coiffed head of hair. I used to look like shit. Now I look "nice." I used to live in a shithole apartment that's now been condemned and demolished. I now live in a nice loft. Have I become a tool for the Man, and have I so internalized my tool-ness that my music has slipped into whitebread conformity?

I don't know. I'll have to play the demo for some punks. If they kill me, I'll know that I've slipped. In the meantime, I'm going to go put on some Bad Brains. I Against I.

Maybe I'll be inspired. It's my last hope. Before I get old.

Kerosene@aol.com



The Mushy Part

Back in March the weather was still pretty crappy. The skies were always a soft, fragile gray, and the wind blew with great, endless lungs. In spite of that, we decided to get a pint of ice cream for lunch and sit in the park consuming it. We sat on the children's swing sets, passing the pint back and forth, swaying lazily to and fro, our shoes digging into the sand. I looked at him and knew that every word I said and every advance I made into his personal space from this moment on was an act of flirting, and that it was probably the same for him. I figured that it was only a matter of time before he finally tried to kiss me (and I would let him), and I was trying to let him know somehow that he had been granted clearance.

So our conversation danced about and we sat in the sand together under the swings. People in the park looked at us as we got sand in our clothes and shoes and hair and didn't care. Talk turned to the big piece of playground equipment attached to the swings, and the fire-pole at the top. I used to be afraid of sliding down the pole when I was a kid, and would never do it. He dared me to do it now. I was slightly reluctant, then

I said I would do it under the condition that he kiss me when I got to the bottom. He unflinchingly agreed.

I climbed the ladder and with ease grasped the iron pole, swung my legs around it, and slid to the ground. But he didn't kiss me, which I took as a sign that I needed to be a bit less nebulous about my intentions. It was almost time to go back to the office, but we still had 10 or 15 minutes to walk around the block to the corner store to get a drink. The sun emerged from behind the clouds as we walked down the sidewalk.

With our juice in hand, we wandered back to South Park, looking in fancy shop windows and at interestingly designed glass blocks set into stone walls that reminded me of Tetris pieces. We stopped at a painted metal bench and sat down, admiring the carved tree trunks turned into flower boxes next to us. Behind the bench a window looked in on some kind of pet store, where a parakeet peered at us and paced back and forth.

I leaned against him, wishing we could really leave work and just go to the beach as we had daydreamed, and then he kissed me at last, right as it was about time to go back to work. After that things kept getting better and better, but I won't forget what life was like before he kissed me, when it was all about excitement and anticipation. I could spend a few years of eternity sitting in the swings with him, looking at his face, and wondering when he would make his move. Or let me make mine.

The Usual Rambling Vignettes

I don't go to shows anymore. I want to, but the music scene here in San Francisco is a disgrace. I just wait for bands from other places to come here and play, which happens less and less. The last truly great show I went to was almost a year ago. It featured the Promise Ring. Last week Bruno and I went over to the Edinburgh Castle to see what he described as an energetic pop-punk band he has seen some months back. I looked forward to seeing something new that would make me excited about punk again. Unfortunately, it was just a band that carried the same name, apparently, and one of the worst bands I had seen in a long while. They had one of those singing drummers who writes god-awful lyrics, and a cheesy guy playing keyboards. And a smoke machine. Etc. We left conspicuously in the midst of the second song.

I should point out that while I write this, I am listening to *Elton John's Greatest Hits*. And loving it. I bet you know at least half of these songs. And today at work I listened to some Pavement, some Elliott Smith, the *Boogie Nights* soundtrack, and Built to Spill. Felt good.

This weekend, after a brunch of crepes and some light record shopping in the Castro, we decided to head over to Epicenter. I hadn't been there in years. At least. I moved to the City a couple months ago and am now revisiting many of the parts that were once rare treats, but can now be taken for granted. The Epicenter stairwell still smelled like the water damage that haunted it last time I was there. Bruno looked in vain for Modest Mouse 45s, and I perused the zine racks. Just looking at the collection there of home-made and printed fanzines made me want to do *Hex* again. The sloppy handwriting, the clean layouts, the poorly-rendered photographs, the endless record reviews and band interviews, it took me back several years into my past. I didn't see too many titles I recognized, apart from issues I already

had. Except a newish copy of *Murder Can Be Fun*, one of my favorites. I bought it, and we left. They were playing an old Very Small compilation in the store that I used to have, and I still remembered most of the words.

Things have changed. Back when I did my zine on a semi-regular basis, I also worked part-time and not only had time to write the magazine, I also had time to do things that were worth writing about. Not that I am currently unhappy with my life, it's more that I wish I was writing more. You may have noticed my column missing from the last issue. I am a slacker, and I work full-time at a new job.

Multimedia Gulch Geek Girl

It's nice that I am no longer a receptionist, that I no longer have to deal with the public in any way, shape or form. I don't have to talk to anyone except those who are within the vicinity of my desk. Best of all, I am doing a job that I actually enjoy. I'm an HTML contractor for a huge multi-million dollar corporation. I write code, I make Web pages. I do neat stuff. I guess in the time I have been writing for *Punk Planet*, I have done many things, from telephone solicitation to working in a copy store to unemployment. And for the first time, I actually enjoy what I am doing, and not only that, I am making enough to live in San Francisco. Not in my own apartment, of course. But that is a realistic goal of mine now.

My new house is the lower flat in an old San Franciscan house between the Mission and the Castro. There is a shady backyard, a musty basement, a vast garage. And four fewer roommates than I once had. I'm actually pals with the people I live with, which hasn't happened in a while.

My neighborhood is great. There's a Peet's Coffee store a block away. The girl who lived here this summer went back to New York and gave me her bed, it's the biggest bed I've ever owned. It's astonishing how much of my furniture was free. I think the only thing I paid for was my bookcase, from Target, \$30. And I assembled it myself.

In the morning I walk to the BART station down on 16th because the MUNI streetcars are a waste of time, and I ride with the suits downtown. I can still wear blue jeans and T-shirts to work, no one says a thing. The other day the train sat restless on the platform and I watched a girl walk by with a hickey on her neck. I'm sure that's what it was. The sun has been shining lately, cold in the shade, warm everywhere else. I walk up the street past two flower stands on my way to the office, and sometimes I buy flowers for me or for my geek boy. The bridge to the East Bay reaches the shore right near my building, and looking up at it gives me vertigo.

I Used To Live In Berkeley

After work I headed down Second Street to the station, passing the construction site on Mission, where some kind of device was making a horrific, metallic *bang..bang..bang* like a stake being pounded into a vampire's heart. The shockwaves rang across the wide SOMA corridors, bouncing off of sleek, grey telco walls.

I waited on the platform. The commuters around me stood in deliberate silence, reading leaves of newspaper, their belongings pressed close to them. The long bowels of the station were devoid of circulation, and a grim, inconspicuous wave of heat swept across bodies and beneath layers of

clothes. I couldn't wait to get on the train.

I glanced up at the commuter channel monitor as a Pittsburg train pulled away. An image flashed on the screen, made to look exactly like the train announcements; same typeface, colors, etc. But instead of listing a destination and number of cars, it said simply "Capitalism" and beneath that "Stops at nothing." Clever.

My train car was air-conditioned. I leaned against the plexiglass and read "A Prayer for Owen Meany." Which I recommend to any of you. I just finished a book called *Anywhere But Here* by Mona Simpson, and if you are a girl (or even a boy), you simply must read this book.

It seemed to take longer than usual to get to Berkeley, but I didn't really look out the window or glance around me at all. I just kept my nose in the book and felt the icy simulated breeze creep across my skin. At my stop, I took the steps two at a time to street level. The sun was slanted across the main street, reflecting blinding shades of gold as it was delivered into the western hills opposite the Bay. Shattuck Avenue was alive with noise and people and the usual pockets of unpleasantness that has always been there since I first moved to the East Bay more than four years ago.

I used to work in this building directly across from the main entrance to BART, right above the candy store. It was a telemarketing gig, though we weren't really selling anything, we just raised funds for non-profits. All the punks worked there at one time or another, since they would hire you in spite of what you looked like and you could come to work in the afternoon. And if you were good, you could make a lot of money. Anyway, the point is that when the office was still in that building (they moved a couple blocks away two summers ago), the area in front of our entrance was still pretty low-key; a couple panhandlers pacing the sidewalk and playing chess in the little plaza, people waiting for the bus, that's about it.

For some reason, this area in front of the BART station has in the past year or so evolved into a hangout for the usual variety of street kids that normally you would find lying in heaps in Telegraph Avenue. I walked past the candy store yesterday afternoon and on the little bench where me and my coworkers used to take our coffee breaks, there were about fifteen or more suburban gutterpunks, some laying in the bushes sleeping, some with dogs, looking like hell, sparechangin. How glamorous.

I must have lived here a long time to see this one street change so much. Kind of makes you wonder what the process is to turn a street from something unobtrusive and relatively empty into a magnet for homeless alcoholic 15-year-olds who like bad music. Anyway.

I went around the corner to my P.O. box. And just as I had hoped, my license to drive was tucked within. Picture didn't even look too gruesome. Not only that, I got a fanzine from this boy in Ohio. It's called BRV and I actually got a copy of it from someone in Olympia like five years ago. He wrote me a nice little card too. Every time someone take the time and effort to make a fanzine and send me off a copy of what they have made, it gives me that much more inspiration to do another hard copy of my zine, too.

I went straight back down into the BART station, and the train came a couple minutes later to carry me back home to the city. I looked out the window as the train moved through West Oakland, at the dilapidated houses and rubbish-filled yards, fingers of rust running across metal roofs and

abandoned cars. The new freeway cut through the decay like a clean, white bone, and still had hardly any traffic on it. Then the train accelerated, dove down beneath the Bay, and a dense roar filled the dim car as it kept going faster and faster.

The One Dollar Flogger

My fingernails and toenails matched; a deep, glossy purple. It was hot enough to go braless all day and wear sunglasses and drink mimosas on the porch with orange juice and lemonade. My roommate orchestrated a huge multi-person garage sale to benefit their Burning Man group, and managed to raise almost \$500. A bunch of us lounged on the steps in the shade, watching the people go by and our belongings get picked through over and over. I sold a few things I was unable to sell at my own garage sale last month.

My evening plans were canceled early in the day, which kind of soured me for a bit, so I grabbed a couple of popsicles out of the freezer and carried them to Ert's house in the burning sun. They didn't melt, but they did develop a sheen. Banana for me, lime for her. We had boca burgers and watched *Spice World* while painting our nails.

At the video rental place, we passed a guy on the sidewalk who was selling things for a dollar. He announced that everything was a buck, so it got our attention and we had to take a look. The fool was selling a set of four leather bondage cuffs with metal rings and wool padding, for a dollar each. Ert bought those, and I got a very nice black leather whip for a buck. It's one of those short whips with many tails, and a handle decorated with silver studs. It has a ring at the top for hanging it on a hook over the bed, presumably. Anyway we got all this great leather gear for \$5, and promptly walked over to the leatherman store by my house which sells just such accessories, and asked for prices on similar items. The cuffs started at \$45, and the whip was around \$20. We giggled gleefully as we headed back to her apartment.

The whip has come in handy on a number of occasions.

Macintosh OS Sucks Ass

I used to be a Mac user—I would defend them vigorously—though now I can't really remember why... something to do with them being "easier to use." Then last winter I got a PC after selling my shitty old Mac LC for \$300 (about twice what it was worth, HA!). I noticed something about the new computer... it had this way of *not crashing* every time I used it. Intriguing.

Since then I have been a convert. Maybe Microsoft isn't the greatest company in the world, maybe a lot of their software sucks (Powerpoint, Frontpage), but damn it's nice to use an OS that can support its own weight.

At my new job, I have a PC on my desk, as well as a brand new Apple G3. The G3 crashes, locks up, dies, closes applications without warning—and this happens every day, every hour. This computer eats shit about 10 or 20 times a day. I am not kidding. It's especially annoying when I am working on a project for my job and haven't saved yet. Too bad, so sad. Why can't the OS at least have a Task Manager, like Windows does? Ugh. The sysadmin guy has already tried to fix it, but he has apparently given up, and it's even worse now. If anyone can give me one reason why the Mac OS is superior to Windows (or for that matter, UNIX), I would love to know.

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Send all replies, comments, and other correspondence to jane@jane.org, or PO Box 989, Berkeley, CA 94701. Oh, and my website has all my old Punk Planet columns too, plus a bunch of other junk. www.jane.org. Cheers.



Los Crudos 1991-1998

As many of you probably know by now, Los Crudos has officially broken up. To me this means no more late night eight hour drives headbanging to Gauze and Indigesti, long talks on said drives about love, religion, life, food, sex and everything else under the sun, hours of tedious labor making photocopies, collating, and stuffing records, or stealing massive amounts of supplies to make those little pieces of art sold as Crudos records and shirts. It also means more than that. It means the death of one of the most important hardcore band of the '90s (along with Drop Dead, Doom, Born Against and a few others).

Los Crudos were 100 percent DIY from day one. They embodied everything I believed about in punk since the first time I saw them with Sludgeworth in the infamous McGregors sometime in 1991 to the last time I will see them next month. They are the band that I have felt the most inspiration, joy, and rage with. I was weaned on them. I saw them easily over a hundred times. I traveled around the Midwest and South America with them. They've been an integral part of my history not just in terms of being punk but also as a person. They are my friends, confidants—and they played in my favorite band. I shared many happy, sad, tense, frustrating, exhilarating, and just plain fun moments with them.

There is always the danger of oversimplifying and heroizing a band and its members, especially Los Crudos, who many have held up as demigods. They are people just like anybody else and don't meet everyone's expectations of them. They aren't all vegetarians or straight edge, they don't spend every second smashing up bank windows. They never had the money to put out enough records to meet the demand. They had personal problems, etc. But they inspired punks (and non-punks) all over the world. They put their hearts into Los Crudos, gave and gave some more to the punk scene and their community all the while sticking to their DIY guns. Everybody loved them regardless of whether or not their regular cup of tea was ska, emo, crust, pop-punk, noise, or hardcore. And rightly so. There was something undeniably special about them that no other band had.

As important as Los Crudos has been and will be for me, I couldn't let their passing go by without saying anything though I don't want to harp on it for pages and pages. I know thousands of you out there feel the same way as I do about them. So now let's all kneel and pray for the blessing that was Los Crudos (just a joke but I didn't know how to end this without sounding cheesy).

Worldwide punk, where have you been all my life?

I usually shy away from writing about what I think about punk, but after seeing the punk scenes in South America and Europe I just can't keep my mouth shut about it. For the first seven years I was into punk I ignored foreign punk aside from the occasional Indigesti or Hiatus listen. Now I kick myself for all the amazing bands I've been missing out on. The punk scenes in almost every country I visited were fully developed and established and produce some of the most amazing music, projects, and ideas I've ever encountered.

The punks I met in Brazil were the most incredibly generous, outgoing, friendly, and overall extraordinary people I've ever met. I was never alone there. At the most crowded show or jam-packed party I would meet everybody in the room within 10 minutes. I'd be greeted with smiles, laughter, and conversation even though I only knew a handful of words in Portuguese. They didn't care what kind of music I liked, what zine I wrote for, or how much money I had—they were ecstatic about communicating with a foreigner and sharing everything they had with me whether that be food or ideas. From the stories I heard and certain events I experienced it appears as though the punks in Brazil are in constant and serious danger with the government, police, skinheads, fascists, Nazis—you name it. Punks there actually risk their lives by being punk. You can't wear a "smash racism" patch there without the threat of backlash. That scares the shit out of me. I don't want to hear about one of my new friends getting beaten to death or shot in the street.

In the other South American countries I didn't hear as many stories about violence but you can be sure it exists. That aside, everywhere I found the same thing—people being incredibly excited to meet us and have the chance to communicate with us face to face. Very, very few DIY bands have gone to South America and they truly appreciated our presence there. And with only about 15 shows in four (five for me, Juan and Martin) weeks there was plenty of time for the most important part of the tour: Meeting and communicating with the people there. Everybody worked hard and took risks for the scenes they have. They had and have to struggle unlike here in the US where any shmoe off the street can do a label, put out a zine, and set up shows without having to deal with repressive governments and a huge general lack of resources.

In Europe, the two things that struck me the most were the incredible thriving squat scene and what it's like to tour. I still can't believe some of the squats I saw there. Cristiania, a squatted community in Copenhagen, Denmark comes to mind. From what I know, all the houses were built by hand, no law exists there (yet there is little to no crime), and they pretty much have everything you need to survive within its boundaries. I was totally blown away by that place. Many of the squats I saw and/or stayed at were

huge buildings with a bar, restaurant, show area, and living spaces and some even had shit like Internet cafes, art studios, tattoo and piercing studios, libraries/book shops, photo darkrooms, and silk-screening rooms. I had no idea such projects were possible. Whenever I thought of squats before I imagined filthy run-down buildings with people living in squalor and no toilets. A few were like that but for the most part they were these absolutely astounding community centers. I never imagined squats could be so damn productive and big.

I was lucky enough to be able to go on tour for about three weeks when I was in Europe. I couldn't believe how great it was to tour there. With maybe one exception there was always a crazy breakfast with fruit, coffee, juice, loaves of bread and a million different jams, sweet spreads, and pates, a huge awesome dinner (and everything was vegan!), and practically unlimited beer for free. Many times we also got snacks during the show and food after the gigs. There was never a problem with a place to crash even though at points there were 11 to 13 of us all traveling together. Why isn't it like that in the US? Of course, I know that most people here don't live in huge four-floor squats with enough room to put up 13 people but it seems to me that feeding a band is essential. Especially here where it's hard to find anything but a fast food "restaurant" when you're traveling with very little time to spare and the vegetarian/vegan staples are Subway and Taco Bell which tend to get old after a few days. And I never heard any band in Europe moan about not getting paid very much. The biggest complaints any band that has ever toured the US are 1) the long drives, 2) the pittance they get paid for shows, and 3) lack of food. Nothing can really be done about the long drives but paying bands fairly and making them food is not that difficult. 10 dollars (which can be taken out of the door) and an hour in the kitchen can make all the difference in the world to a touring band that's starving and doesn't want to—and often doesn't have the time to—drive all over town looking for a place with vegetarian food. Nobody in Europe understands why people don't feed bands in the US and I don't either.

Aside from the squat scene and touring, I was impressed by the general attitude of the people I met. It seemed like people weren't so uptight about drinking or being vegan or pretty much anything else for that matter. I used to almost rabidly hate drinking and though I'm hardly one of those "more beer for the punks" types now. I think it's pretty silly for people to be so prissy about it. Some of the most active and radical people are drinkers. Some aren't. Big deal. I think I only had about one or two conversations about veganism the whole seven months I was there and only on the most general terms. No one was sitting around waiting to jump down anybody else's throat for not being vegan. Most people that were very politically active weren't interested in discussing it all day long or converting everybody around them to their line of thought. In general people were more accepting of others' personal choices and respecting them at the same time (for example, two people I stayed with for three weeks cooked vegan even though they weren't). No matter where I went, with a band or without one, people treated me like a long-lost good friend that was visiting. I never had problems finding a place to crash (except in Florence, but that's a whole other ball game). People fed me, showed me around, took me out, stayed up late talking with me, and even carried my bags for me.

One thing that really frustrates me now is the total lack of awareness on the part of US punks of goings on in other parts of the world. Not very many people seem to know that there is much of a punk scene in Europe much less South America. How many people in the US know what countries Doom and Hiatus (two of the most popular bands in Europe) or Abuso Sonoro and Fun People (2 of the most popular in South America) are from? Granted, part of this (a very small part) is due to lack of access to records, zines, and information in general. I was totally amazed when my friend Dave e-mailed me, asking me to get him a copy of the Unhinged LP—which is all over Europe—because he couldn't get a hold of it in the US. But I think the main reason is lack of caring. So many US bands tour in Europe for people that bust their asses to make sure the Yankees are treated well but hardly any European or South American bands come to the US and when they do no one goes to see them. I heard there were 30 people at the Gauze show in Chicago a few years ago. That's unbelievable. And unfortunately, it seems that when US bands go over to Europe they don't often leave a very good impression on the good folks over there. I was told more than once by people I met that I was the nicest Yank they ever talked to. Sheesh.

Columns ★
★
★ I don't want to sound like I'm completely bagging on the US; I don't think I've traveled enough here to really do that. Things are just different in the places I went to and I liked them a lot more. I'm counting the days until I have the opportunity to travel somewhere else. At any rate, I'm starting (and/or continuing, depending on how you look at it) a label and distribution in the US. I'll be taking care of Alarma/Agipunk in the Western Hemisphere though it looks like it might take a while to get off the ground due to travel plans and current lack of money. I really want to help increase the availability and awareness of foreign DIY punk here and maybe help foreign bands tour here as well. Anyway, my experiences over the last nine months have left me with impressions and ideas I'll never forget and I hope I can transfer some of that enthusiasm and attitude over here.

Thanks, again

The two and a half amazing months I spent in Italy were only possible because of: Michele, Dario, and Nicola in Rome; everyone at La Villa Occupata, Federico, Dimitri, and Gigì in Milan; Claudio in Florence; Mila, Lenin, Patty, Gallo, Gió, Valentina, and Cristina in Pavia. You guys are the best.

Boring information

Still offering articles on East Timor, Nike, and Colombia (2 US stamps or a nice letter if you're from abroad) and Equal Exchange (1 US stamp or nice letter); Let's Go Europe 1998, Lonely Planet Morocco 1998 travel guide, and Hostelling International Europe 1998 for postage money; Italia La Punk comp 7" (with DDI, Sickoids, La Maschera, Crepa, BDO, Insult, Scum of Society) \$3 ppd in U.S. and Crepa/Corrosione split LP (great Italian hardcore) \$8 ppd in U.S. Cash or MOs only! Bearing in mind that I may be leaving the country for several months in mid-January or early February, send me letters/stamps/money at: kimbae@hotmail.com • PO Box 2110 Champaign, IL 61825-2110 U.S.A.



I'm running headlong into the mushroom cloud on the horizon. That's a metaphor, but I'll get to that later. Right now it's a very strange, very beautiful reality. Some curious celestial event has caused a mammoth cloud formation that bears a striking resemblance to a nuclear explosion that is sitting over the skyline of downtown Chicago. I'm running down the path next to Lake Michigan towards the city, towards this bizarre scene.

I spend a good mile and a half of my run thinking about how strange it would be if it was an explosion from a nuclear weapon and how any second I would run right into the wall of fire that was spreading out like pond ripples from ground zero. There I'd be, a pile of ash, or a cloud of vapor on the jogging trail. There I was, out trying to take care of myself by getting some exercise when I was incinerated during some warring nations sneak attack on downtown Chicago. I and the thousands of other people out on the lake today trying to escape the oppressive heat wave that's settled in on us for the last week. Perhaps if it was a nuclear explosion we wouldn't even really notice the rise in temperature since it's been so hot anyway.

The beaches and soccer fields and picnic areas are all packed with people. There are dozens of frisbees and volleyballs and various Nerf products crowding the airspace, cutting lines through the dense smoke of a million portable grills. A mild breeze off the water mixes up the air into a cocktail equal parts low tide, cooking food, car exhaust and tanning products. Shirtless men, screaming children, and stressed mothers sit, stand, run and jump along the beaches and in the grass.

I live pretty far north here in Chicago. It's a nice neighborhood. Not a very hip part of town to live in but it feels pretty safe and I've got a really nice apartment for not a lot of rent. It's a really diverse neighborhood and most people seem decent enough. I'm about a mile or so east of the lake and I go there pretty much everyday either walking my dog, biking or running. It's not too bad during the week but on the weekends, especially on the really hot days it gets really crowded. The beach fills up with families mostly, a lot of Latinos, a lot of old people. It's kind of a lazy, quiet place. The further south you get the busier it gets, peaking down around Michigan Avenue where you can hardly ride your bike at all because the path is so packed with people. People walking, people sitting along the side, roving hordes that take up the whole path, little kids racing back and forth from the beach side to the grassy side, and back again, as well as the corn and ice cream carts you're always within

throwing distance of in this city. The little bells on their carts are as familiar a sound as your own voice.

I don't imagine you make a very comfortable living selling corn from a cart and it must be strictly seasonal work, but you do get to walk around the beach all day and I'm sure that's better than a lot of jobs. I wonder how long you last before the sound of those bells makes you go insane. Or how long before the smell of corn turns your stomach.

II

I'm running headlong into the mushroom cloud on the horizon. Actually, so the metaphor works, I'm running away from the mushroom cloud on the horizon.

One way to reflect on your life is by deciding which of the following you are: A person who is always trying to better themselves, a person who is doing nothing for themselves good or bad, or a person who, in a wide range of velocities, is destroying himself. In the past seven months I've reversed my direction from the latter to the former. Pre-seven months ago I was doing little in the way of taking care of myself. I was drinking a lot, I wasn't eating well, I wasn't getting any exercise, and I could feel myself slipping slowly further into being OK with it all. On more than one occasion I woke up painfully hungover, having broken a piece of furniture, or having punched a hole in the wall after a night of drinking by myself, swearing I'd never do that again, and on more than one occasion I did it again the next night. A couple of times I woke up on my bathroom floor, having laid down there the night before waiting to get sick. I woke up in my hallway, on the living room floor, and, occasionally, in bed.

The general procedure was that I'd stop off at the liquor store on my walk home from the bus stop, on my ride home from work, 6:15 or so. I'd buy a six-pack, walk the four blocks home, cook some spaghetti, and drink. If I ran out of beer after 10 o'clock, when the liquor store closed, I'd be able to read, or write, or work until midnight or one. If I was out before 10 I'd stumble back to the liquor store and buy another six pack and drink some or all of that. I'd work until I was too drunk to type or turn pages. When it got to that point I'd usually go outside and stumble around the neighborhood with my dog and my Walkman listening to Lungfish or the VSS. Sometimes I'd make it over to the park and sit on the swings while George ran around like a crazy person, or dug holes in the sand. There we'd be, him digging and me slowly twisting back and forth in my swing contently singing along with whatever tape I had, sometimes breaking down and crying, almost always barely able to keep myself from falling over. If I didn't go out with George I would usually sit around and listen to music, usually laying on the living room floor, empties gathering around me like weeds sprouting in a garden. I'd lay there watching the distorted flickering of the muted television through the green glass bottles, drifting into various states of unconsciousness, getting up only for the refrigerator or the bathroom, ignoring the phone and the flashing light on the answering machine. If I had to work the next day I'd make sure to start the second six pack in the vicinity of my alarm clock so when I inevitably gave out and fell asleep I'd wake up the next day in time to catch my bus.

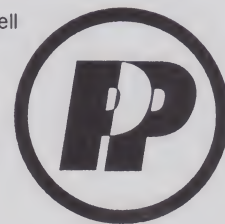
My deal with myself was that I could drink as much and as often as I wanted so long as I was never late for work. Raging headaches, and feeling like I'd been run over by a truck was OK so long as I was on time. And I always was.

My boss was hungover almost as frequently as I was so he usually didn't notice. If it happened we were both hungover he'd start the morning talking about how he was out until 4 a.m. partying (he liked to use "party" as a verb) and once he had exhausted his romanticized evening out he'd ask what I did. Since sitting at home alone drinking and reading sounds a little too depressing I'd always lie and say I went to a bar with some friends. That was enough for him to move the focus of the conversation back to him and his exploits, which was easy enough for me to tune out, so I'd let him go on and on. What really annoyed me is that he was always late. At least I had the intestinal fortitude to drag my sorry ass in on time. So what if I was wearing the same clothes I passed out in the night before. At least I was there.

That was my life for six or eight months. And I didn't mind so much for six or eight months. The vague worry in the back of my mind was that at the three-month mark drinking six beers was enough to fuck me up good, and at the 5 month mark it was 12 beers. My tolerance was increasing steadily and occasionally I would consider the logical extreme of this progress but never for very long and never hard enough to make me change or stop. Plus it all seemed so poetic to me. All the greats had their vices didn't they? I was reading Henry Miller, Hemingway, Bukowski, and Kerouac right then. Look at all they created. And look at all they drank. I was still being productive and creative, even if I didn't feel so great all of the time. But it was getting old and very slowly leading to a worsened state of affairs for me so I decided to change things in my life.

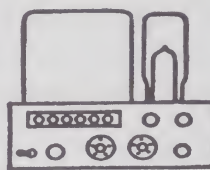
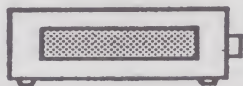
That's when I moved to Chicago and made a new deal with myself. I decided that since I was leaving Boston I would leave a lot of things behind me and start over. Only eight months in and I was already bored by the prospect of alcoholic novelist, so I made a conscious effort to move on and take better care of myself. Since moving here I've cut back on my drinking considerably and have been exercising almost every day. I've come to realize that the self-indulgent, self-loathing, self-destructive artist cliché is embarrassing to be seduced by. At least when its logical conclusion is the shortening of your creative life. If you think all your literary heroes needed their vices in excess to create, I think you're seriously underestimating their artistic gifts and if your assumption is that you need those same vices to create perhaps you're underestimating your own.

In the throes of my eight month flirtation with low-grade self destruction a wise friend told me he was more interested in sticking around long enough to see the score go up on the big board than he was in some faux-poetic life shortened by really predictable and cliché indulgences. I think he was gently trying to tell me that anybody can allow themselves to be eaten up by their demons, but there is a life worth living to be found in beating back those demons and keeping them in their place.





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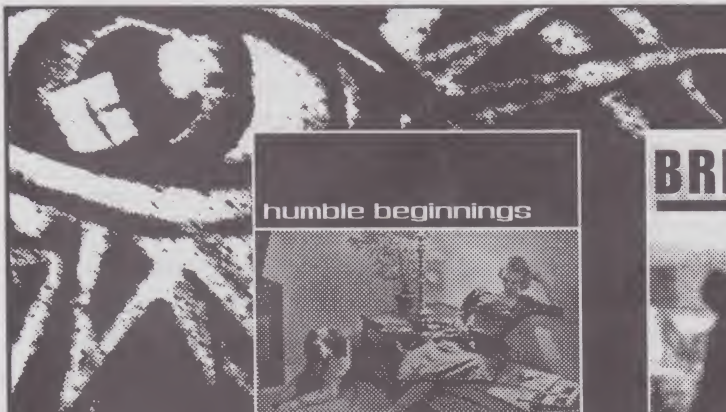
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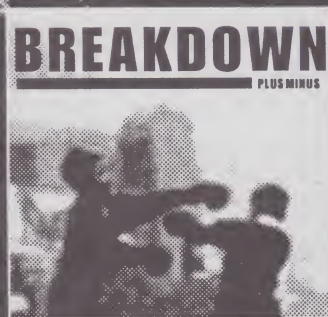


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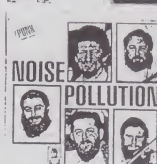
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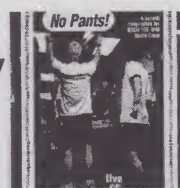
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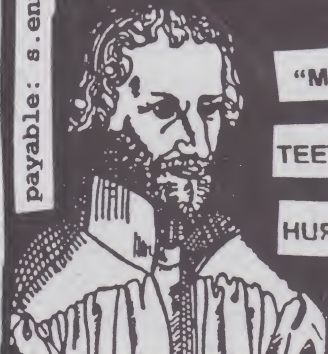
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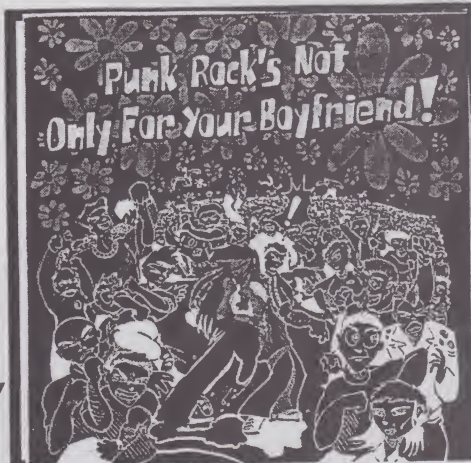


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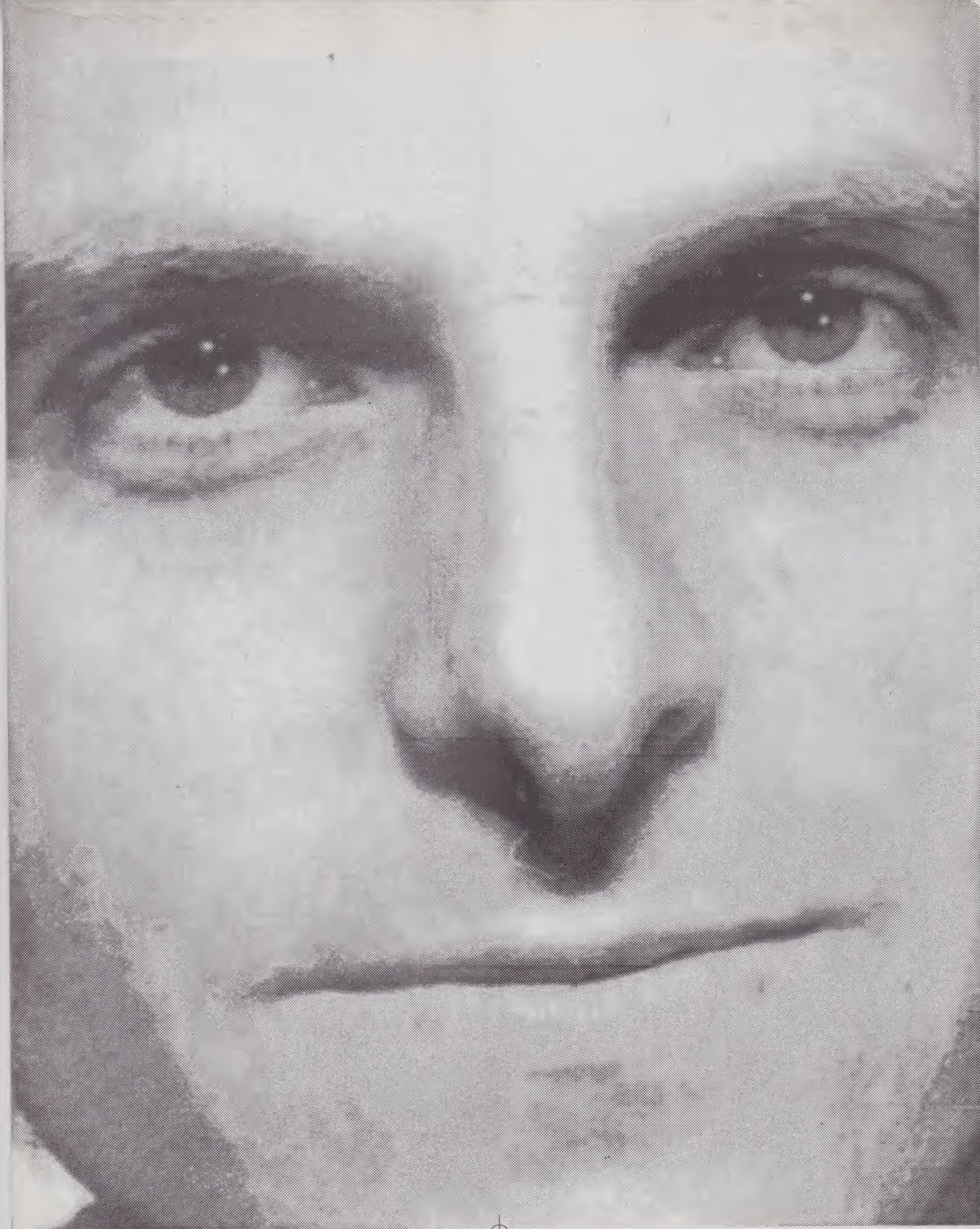
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Kevin Seconds, through his band 7 Seconds, is often credited with being one of the pioneers of the DIY punk rock movement. While many of his peers like Ian MacKaye and Henry Rollins have achieved a certain amount of success and financial security, these things seem to have eluded Kevin. Nowadays, when 7 Seconds comes up in conversation, it's usually preceded "Whatever happened to..." The reality is that *nothing* happened to 7 Seconds, or Kevin himself. Kevin has put out close to two albums a year for the last 10 years—both with 7 Seconds as well as with project bands and as a solo artist. When I think about why he's fallen into relative anonymity while his peers have achieved notoriety and recognition for their effort, the only answer I can come up with is simply that Kevin is way too busy having fun playing music to slow down and put any time into business matters or the compromises involved in reaching a bigger audience. Over the last 10 years, Kevin has put out records on tiny indie labels, big indie labels, his own labels and was even signed to a major label for one record of a three record deal, but opted to get out of his contract. Through it all, he's remained committed to making great music and doesn't appear to have a bitter bone in his body—in fact, he seems happier than ever. He's married to his best friend Alyson, and they're both playing in his latest project, Go National. The new band is the first non-7 Seconds project of Kevin's that really feels complete and capable of standing on its own. Hopefully, it will help Kevin finally achieve the place in punk he deserves.

Interview by John Baccigaluppi

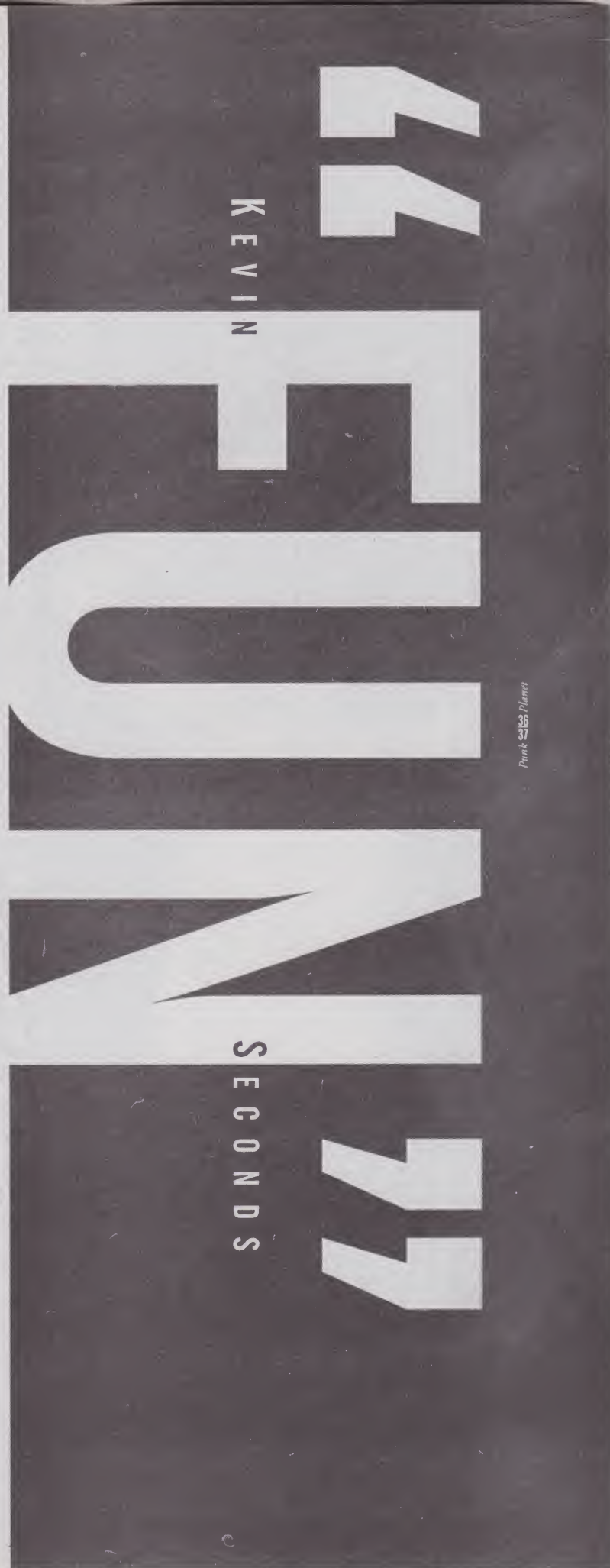
It seems to me when you say "7 Seconds" or "Kevin Seconds" to people now it's like...

"Whoa, are they still around?" [laughs]

So what have you been doing for the last 10 years?

Since *The Crew*, Seven Seconds has put out probably five albums and toured a lot. We had our first major label experience two and a half years ago. Along the way, I've also done solo stuff—side projects like Drop Acid and 5'10". Now I'm doing something I really don't even consider a side project, called Go National. I'm still totally involved with 7 Seconds. We've got a bunch of dates coming up and we're going to record at least another album.

What was Drop Acid all about?



I WANNA HAVE FUN WITH IT AND I WANT IT TO BE SOMETHING THAT I REALLY BELIEVE IN AND I DIG DOING AND I CAN FEEL PROUD ABOUT WHEN IT COMES OUT.



I had been playing with 7 Seconds for about 13 years and I just felt consumed by it. I felt like I couldn't do anything away from 7 Seconds. I had all these other songs that I had been working on that just didn't seem to fit with 7 Seconds and so I thought, "Hey man, I'm gonna try a side project." We did the first album but I didn't really want to pick up a full-time band because I still was involved with 7 Seconds. It was really just me and whatever friends I had around me at the time, 'cause the line-up changed quite a bit. I just wanted to do Drop Acid 'till it stopped being fun and at one point I guess it did. I still really like the music, but it just got really out of whack focus-wise you know? It just seemed to go all over the place musically and that's when it wasn't that much fun anymore.

The next thing you did was Seed and 5'10". Both came out at the same time.

I always come back to the whole late-at-night-with-the-4-track just doing silly weird poppy sorta songs. When I recorded the Seed 7", it was just a drum machine that I played guitar and bass over. I actually did a couple of



shows where I played along with a boom box playing the drum machine tape. 5'10" started out being Brent Spain and I. He played drums and I played guitar and sang. I liked the songs the Spinanes had done—they were able to just do this guitar and drum thing and make it sound really good. I thought some of the songs sounded really good without bass, so I did the whole record without bass just to see what it sounded like. The faster songs don't sound as full, but I think it came off pretty well without the bass. 5'10" actually turned into a band because Allyson, my wife, was already helping out on backing vocals and she didn't just wanna stand around singing so she played guitar. We kept working with her on guitar and then Jen Braun from Tiger Trap was added on bass. We went on the road and that was really fun. I really enjoyed that period where it was just a new band again and nobody knew who we were. We were playing on these crazy weird punk bills but we weren't really a punk band. It was a blast but Brent moved to Colorado to go to school and I just didn't want to continue on at that point. He was a pretty valuable part of the whole 5'10" thing.

That's the point where it ended with 5'10" and began with Go National. ¶ Go National started when I went in to Enharmonik studio and did a recording of just me playing all the instruments, which ended up on Revelation. I liked it so much that I wanted to make it a band effort and I knew I wanted to do something with Allyson again. So we got Mike Tamony involved playing bass and we went through various drummers until Mark Harrod, our current drummer, joined. We kept playing in Sacramento and doing out of town shows as much as possible to let people know that, yeah I'm involved with this but if you're expecting 7 Seconds type stuff, you'll be disappointed because it's way different—way poppier. We have a CD called *Got My One Good Eye on You* coming out that we're doing ourselves on a label I started about a year and a half ago. It started out as a cassette label called Poprockit and this will be the label's first CD release. ¶ At the same time, I'm still involved with 7 Seconds but we're not really touring like we used to. It's been a while since we put out an album and people in the band have had kids and there's been some health things going on. But we're still hanging in there.

want to make sure that it stays as pure and as true as it can. I wanna have fun with it and I want it to be something that I really believe in and I dig doing and I can feel proud about when it comes out. I really want to work at making it better and keep going with it. That's the first time I've really felt that with any projects besides 7 Seconds. ¶ We're going into our 19th year now with 7 Seconds and it's sorta developed into a.... Well, we're just not stressed out about it anymore. If we get an offer to play some cool shows or go to Japan like we did last year, we'll do it, but we don't want to stress out about it anymore, it's just not worth it.

How did that Japan trip come about?

We got an e-mail from this guy Mitch in Japan saying, "What would it take to get you guys to come over to Japan?" And I said, "Not a lot, we'd love to come over." Mitch was just rad. He's an old hardcore fan—he's been into American hardcore stuff for years and loves all the East Coast stuff like Agnostic Front and Sick of It All and that stuff. It was just a



GO NATIONAL

In my opinion, Go National seems like the most fully developed thing you've done since 7 Seconds.

Yeah, I agree. I think it's the first time I've really really been stoked about calling it a band and not just going, "Oh it's just this little solo side thing I'm doin', you know." It has a lot to do with the fact that I like the people in the band, Allyson and Mike and Mark. With Mark our new drummer, everybody really does genuinely like each other, we get along, we have the same sort of sense of humor. It's not that there's no real stress involved, but usually as far as playing goes, it's all just fun and that's what it's all about. We're not trying to be clever and I don't think we're the most original band in the world. I just don't wanna get too hung up on what were supposed to be and I don't want anything to ruin the fun part. ¶ I guess I'm just at that point in my life where I want to be more in control of my creative output. I don't want to feel like I'm totally losing control. I just

blast. We've toured America I don't know how many times, and we still love doing that, but when you go over to another country, it's just a whole different situation. The enthusiasm is different and the energy is different.

Let's talk a little bit about when 7 Seconds signed to Immortal/Epic/Sony.

At the point just before signing with Immortal, we were going to record an album regardless. We were just hoping that we wouldn't have to do it on a on a label that was going to sit on it like what's happened in the past with other labels we've dealt with. We sent out a couple tapes to some of the bigger hardcore punk labels and there just wasn't any biting. I think we're regarded in the hardcore scene as being these guys who have been around forever and maybe have had our day and that day's past. I understand that way of thinking—I don't agree, but I can kind of

understand it because we have never been consistent and we don't come out with an album every year. In the past five years, we've done some touring but haven't really toured. Our friend Brent [Spain] was acting as our manager at the time and started sending out tapes to some other labels, including some majors. The interest started coming mostly from the major labels. I think a lot of their interest was because at that point it was the crest of the big punk thing—Green Day and then Offspring and Rancid. So, I guess in that respect we were in a good position because we were established as a band, people knew who we are so we'll be able to sell a really decent amount of records. And that's just how it was. Different majors started coming around asking and we were just basically blowing it off—we weren't really taking it that seriously. ¶ Immortal kept calling and they came up to some shows. They came up to Sacramento and we talked and it started to make a little more sense. Here was a smaller record label that had some success with like bands like Korn. We talked about it and said "Look. Maybe it's time to think about this more seriously." I mean, we didn't really have a lot of options at that point. We didn't want to put out our own record then, because none of us really wanted to accept the responsibility to do that and we didn't really have the money. So we got involved with Immortal and at first, it seemed pretty cool. All the terms we asked for they agreed to. The number one thing was that we didn't want anyone telling us what we could do music-wise or artwork-wise. We wanted to do everything ourselves. They wanted us to come down to LA and record at some well-known big rock studio but we wanted to record at Enharmonik and they had to deal with that because that was just part of the agreement. I love the record. I think it's one of the best we've done in a long, long time. I mean, it's consistent, it's solid, it's a good hardcore record. I'm proud of that record and I think that—looking back on it—had it been on a label like say, Epitaph or one of the bigger independent labels, I think it would have done a lot better just because it was more geared to that that kind of thing. ¶ Immortal just didn't seem to know what to do with it. We did all the things, we were supposed to do: we toured our butts off and did all the radio interviews and in-store record store appearances and all that stuff. We wanted to make an effort to try and really get this record out there and they just kinda fumbled the ball. They just kinda sat on it. I don't know what they were thinking, they just lost focus on how to market the record. We just got sick of the situation. We wanted out of the deal. We left on our own terms which was cool and we even got them to pay us money for a record that we never got around to recording with them, which was kinda cool. ¶ When it was all over with, it was just a big relief. I'm not going to say I regret it cause I don't—it was an experience that I think I needed to go through. It's easy to sit around and talk about how evil major labels are when you've never even dealt with them. I'm glad we experienced it—now we have something we can point to as to why it's a bad idea.

OK, so now you've come full circle and you're ready to put out your own record by yourself. How do you feel about that?

Well, you know, part of me is really nervous because I ran a label back in the '80s with Positive Force. It did really well but was really successful only because we worked with great bands. It wasn't 'cause we knew what we were doing cause we didn't. I didn't know anything about business. I learned as I went along and I screwed up a lot of stuff. I was having a hard time running a record label and being in a band and I was booking shows for other bands in Reno as well. I don't want to do that again. ¶ As far as Go National stands, the idea of going out and shopping us around to labels doesn't appeal to me. It's like we can sit around and wait around and hope that someone likes us enough to maybe put something out but that's just the first part of the nightmare. If you do get a deal, then you

have to deal with all the legal crap and hope you get the best terms in your contract—all this crap that I just don't wanna think about right now. I just wanna play music and enjoy it while I'm still fairly young and not hassle with it. Doing our own label is going to be a lot of work, but I think it will be fun. I wanna get the CD out 'cause I think it's a great record. I believe in it enough to say, "Screw it. Let's just do it ourselves." Even though I know it's going to be a lot of work and I'm gonna hate it at times, in the long run it'll be more fulfilling. ¶ It also finally establishes Poprockit, which for the past year and a half has been putting out cassette releases of different local bands and singer/songwriters. It's all been really low profile and I would like to finally establish the label cause I think Sacramento has some great bands and I think people would love them. If I can in any way help do that, I want to. There hasn't really been a Sacramento label that people identify with Sacramento music. Hopefully this'll set that up.

You seem to spend as much time trying to help out other artists as you do helping yourself—maybe even more time. You host open mic nights, you do a radio show, and you run a label. Why do so much instead of just focusing on your own career?

I think it all just comes down to the fact that when I first starting playing music and when 7 Seconds first started in Reno in 1980, we lived in a town where there was nothing going on. There was no scene. There was no place to go hang and play music with people that you knew. We were forced to try to create something and eventually ended up really creating a whole music scene in Reno. When I moved to Sacramento, there were a lot of bands and there were clubs but there just didn't seem to be any kind of a focus. So I thought if I ever got the chance to get my foot in the door and start doing something to help other musicians, I wanted to do that. I thought of starting my own label, but I didn't have the time for that then. ¶ The open mic thing came about because I'd go over and get coffee and I'd think, "Man, what if there was some music going on here tonight? This place would be packed." I knew all these different songwriters that didn't have a place to play, so I started doing open mics and it just kinda went from there. There's times where I get sick of doing it. I always love the creative part of it, but it almost becomes a job 'cause every Tuesday night I'm doing an open mike. ¶ But I just really dig Sacramento. I like the music scene here and I like the fact that there's a billion bands here and a billion singer/songwriter types and anything I can do to help spread the word, I'm down with. I've had a lot of support and help so I try to do whatever I can to give something back. If it means an open mike or just doing a little cassette-only label, that's fine with me, I like doing it. I genuinely like the stuff that I'm putting out on the label or I wouldn't do it.

Do you see Poprockit as more a regional label or do you see it documenting a sound that could come from other parts of country?

That's a really good question. The idea is for Poprockit to be mostly a regional label right now because there's enough really cool stuff, really cool bands coming out of here. But, at the same time, you're probably not going to hear any metal records coming out of Poprockit because it's not the kind of stuff that I like personally. I'm a sucker for hooks. I always have been, even in hardcore—the bands that had the hooks just blew me away. I was never big fan of that growling punk rock stuff. I was always the guy who liked melodic stuff. I'm not against doing stuff with music or bands from out of town, but I'd like try to focus on Sacramento just 'cause there's enough great stuff coming out of here that deserves to be put out.

Do you think it's important that a scene have a certain sound or does that make it short lived?

I think so. I don't think it's that important to have a scene where you can go, "Oh that scene." Take Seattle: I like some of the bands that

came out of the whole Seattle scene way back when, but it really did get to a point where every band you'd hear, you'd know they were from Seattle. Then it got really ugly when the bands weren't from Seattle but they sounded like they were! ¶ I don't want to play down the concept of a scene because I'm a scene kind of guy. I think it's good to connect with people and know who's out there listening. And for me, I've always been about trying to work with people that are my peers and I wanna know who I'm dealing with. I don't like the idea of, "I'm the artist and you're the audience." I like being involved with them. ¶ For instance, there's this songwriter guy that came from L.A. and played Sunday night at Capitol Garage. He said that it was such a refreshing thing to come up here—and I've heard this a lot—to Sacramento, where everybody's friendly and there's this feeling like everybody kind of knows each other. He was saying, "I come up here and no one knows who I am, but there's

I don't think a scene has to be this big, difficult thing. I think that sometimes people just want to make it more difficult for whatever reason and it starts to become unfun and fun is my middle name.



support here for me, and that makes me want to come back up again." I mean, the crowd came out on a Sunday night and didn't know who he was. That's what it's about. I don't think a scene has to be this big, difficult thing. I think that sometimes people just want to make it more difficult for whatever reason and it starts to become unfun and fun is my middle name. [laughs]

That's a good title for this interview: Kevin "Fun" Seconds.

I don't know, it doesn't really have a ring to it. ☺

IF THE ONLY PROBLEM I EVER HAVE IS PEOPLE IN THIS SMALL SCENE BADMOUTHING ME,



Get The Kids Up

I think the Get Up Kids are one of those bands that you either get immediately or you never get at all. They're not a band that "grows on you" and not a band that you particularly "work for." There's nothing complicated about the Get Up Kids. They play straight-ahead, heartfelt songs about love, love lost and all points in between. It's this simplicity that elicits such strong emotions from their audience—emotions of both love and hate. Some people find it corny and artificial, others find it forever endearing and genuine. Being one that finds himself firmly in the latter category, I explain myself simply by saying that I related. When I put their disc in my CD player, I knew what they were singing about—I had lived it all.

Intro by Dan Sinker. Interview with Matt Pryor by Josh Hooten
Photos by Shawn Scallen

If you hadn't become a musician what do you think you would be filling your time with?

As far back as I can remember I've always wanted to be a musician. To be perfectly honest, I don't think I'd be a slacker per se, but I probably wouldn't have a whole lot of direction. Lately I've become infatuated with cooking so I've decided if the band doesn't work out, I'm going to try cooking school. As for everyone else in the band, Jim was going to art school so he would have probably pursued that, Rob and Ryan probably would have done the college thing. I can't say that they wouldn't have done the Mormon thing either because that's how they were raised. I can't say for sure other than I know Jim would have stayed in art school. What you do with an art school degree I don't know. [Laughs]

There are so many options. I have one, I know. [Laughs] I went for the most practical degree you can get. Graphic design.

At the art school here, the fine arts majors give the practical arts majors a lot of shit. But fuck that. Fine art doesn't always pay the rent.

And at my school, and I'm assuming other places, the loudest critics of people doing something practical were having all their bills paid by their parents.

When you're worried about the rent you have a whole lot less time to be telling people what to do with their lives. It gives you a different perspective on a lot of things.

And it makes it easier to understand why some people make the decisions they do. There are different levels of compromise. The world is not entirely black and white.

Right. But I'm assuming that like if the KKK wanted you to design their newsletter you wouldn't do it...

No I wouldn't. Well what would something like that pay do you think? [Laughs] I'm kidding. But my point is that decisions in life aren't usually that intense. Most things fall safely in the non-offensive middle of the road category. It's not great, but it's also not evil. ¶ Do you feel you're living a sheltered creative existence? You exist in such a small scene and it's a scene that is desperately lacking in critical analysis. The best people can come up with is "that band is awesome" or "that band sucks." Do you ever feel you're working in an arena from which you will never really know if your work is good or complete shit because nobody thinks or speaks critically about it?

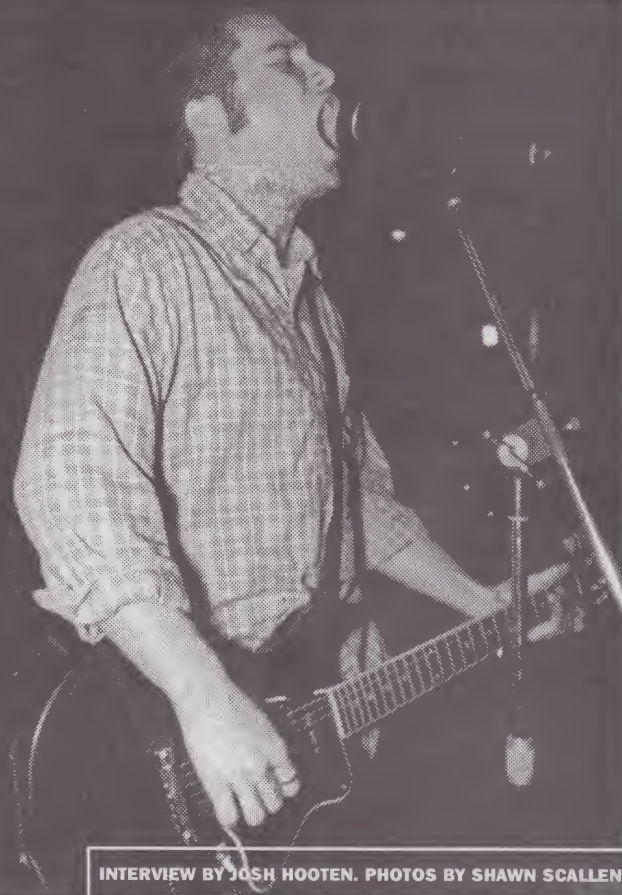
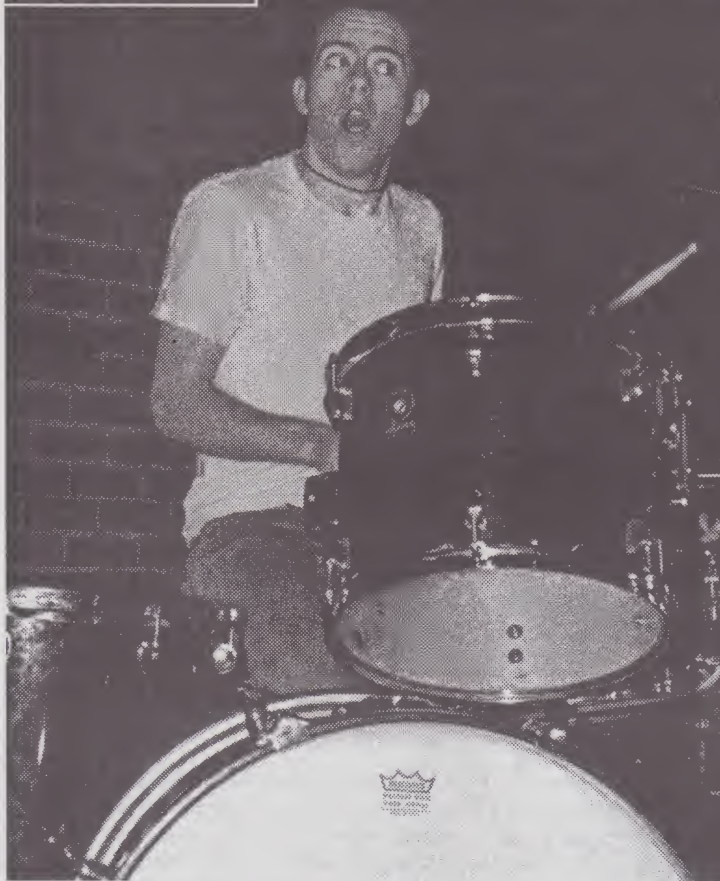
Like people can't sit down and tell you why something is good or bad?

Exactly. Does that invalidate the feedback you do get?

That's a really interesting question.

I'm totally deep. [Laughs] Do you think if you existed in a bigger genre you'd do as well? A lot of people really like you guys, and a lot of people really don't I guess. [Laughs] Some people even start zines based on not liking you. Do you take the criticism very seriously?

I'M DOING ALL RIGHT



INTERVIEW BY JOSH HOOTEN. PHOTOS BY SHAWN SCALLEN

You can't really take anything too seriously. In any art form you should probably be making the art for yourself. You can take criticism into consideration, but you can't let it get to you. When I read things on the Internet—people badmouthing us—my first reaction is to get really mad. But when I think about it, it's kind of reassuring in a weird way that it's only punk rock. I mean really, how many people read the Caulfield webpage? If the only problem I ever have is people in this small scene badmouthing, me I'm doing all right. I never really thought about it in terms of good feedback because when I get that I'm usually just really stoked. I've always kind of figured it like this: I don't care who likes what I'm doing. If they like it, that's great and I appreciate it, but I also don't care who doesn't like what I'm doing. I didn't join a band to make friends but I didn't join a band to make enemies either. I never really think about it being on such a small scale. If you take it to the next level and think about music on the radio and so forth, I don't think the competition is any more fierce as far as the bands being good or anything. The competition is more fierce when it comes to who has more push than you or who has more staying power than you. That's all behind the scenes stuff. You don't have to be a good band to be on the radio, that's pretty obvious. [Laughs]

Actually, I don't think they let you on if you're good. [Laughs]

I think music is different from a lot of things, in that you don't have to necessarily be good to make it. Like to be a writer, you have to be at a certain level to make it writing novels or whatever. You have to be at a certain level to make it as a pro baseball player too. You don't necessarily have to be at a certain level to play in a rock band.

I always find I feel more validated when I receive praise from someone whose work I know and respect than I do from someone I don't know anything about.

It definitely feels better when someone you look up to appreciates your work. It's a little bit different for me because when anybody appreciates what we do, I just take that as a compliment. Anybody who likes us is one more person who will come see us play and make the show that much better. When we got to play those shows with Rocket From The Crypt, it was so cool to get to hang out with those guys and when they say they like you, it's like "Wow!" I've been a fan of theirs forever so it was really cool to hear that. ¶ There are certain levels you get to when you start to feel like a professional. Not in the sense of money, but just in terms of being a band. We got a van and we thought, "Yeah! We're a rock band now!" And when we all finally got decent equipment, we were really excited. Or going on your first tour. Then playing with Rocket From The Crypt, you're getting to play bigger and bigger shows.

When you are 50 years old, do you think you will be telling your kids how you were in a rock band once, as some vague distant memory, or do you think you will still be playing music, or somehow involved in the lifestyle you now lead?

Looking at how I've changed over the last few years I've learned to never say I'll never do something and to never say I will be doing something. A million things could change between now and then. The only thing that's really been constant my whole life has been music, so I would imagine that I will still have something to do with it. But you never know. When I get to be 30, I could just say "fuck it," go raise a family and be a chef. I don't know. I do spend hours a day just sitting playing my guitar and it's one of the few things that really makes me happy, so I can only imagine that I will keep doing that. But I can totally understand when people get burned out on stuff—especially in the punk rock scene where everyone is

I think the obligation you have to your fans is the same obligation you have to yourself. Only do what you want to do

so hyper-critical. Maybe I'll be a withered old man sitting on my porch playing my guitar and that will be the extent of it, but I would like to be doing more than that.

That sounds like a very poetic place to find yourself.

See, I too can be deep! [Laughs]

You said that you've learned in the last few years to not make broad statements about where you will be or won't be or what you will or won't be doing. Does that mean you've changed a lot in the last few years?

Well I'm 21 years old and anybody that doesn't change a lot from the time they're 16 to the time they're 21 is probably afraid to. I've been playing in bands since I was 14. I went through my "punk as fuck" stage, and my "I'm only going to listen to indie label bands" stage. When I got into music, I was way into metal.

Right on!

We're actually doing a Mötley Crüe cover for this compilation that's coming out. I'm totally stoked about it. I went from metal into the early stages of that whole grunge thing before it got really big—you've always gotta say you were into it before it got really big.

You're old school grunge.

I'm old school grunge. [Laughs] I was wearing cut off jeans and long underwear in '83. [Laughs] When I got into that, I got rid of my metal records and when I got into punk, I got rid of the grunge stuff. I kind of regret that now because now I appreciate a lot of different things whereas then I had to go through all these distinct phases to get to this point. Like the Pixies are one of my favorite bands in the entire world, but I sold my whole Pixies collection when I got into Mudhoney and Soundgarden or whatever. Now I feel stupid because I've been on this hunt to back-stock my record collection because I regret getting rid of all that stuff. I've changed a lot. I know everyone else in the band has changed—Jim used to be straightedge for Christ's sake. [Laughs]

That's a skeleton in a lot of people's closets.

On our first 7" he's wearing a straightedge necklace. We've all changed. But I still feel like the same person. Like when I think of people changing, I think of huge stuff like people with straightedge tattoos that started drinking or people that totally turn their back on who they used to be. I think I've changed, but more in the sense of accepting everything that I once was. I'm not so one-sided on issues anymore, I'm more well-rounded.

Change doesn't necessarily mean you become something that you weren't before. I think that is a change, but progress is also a change. Manifesting yourself in a different way doesn't mean you've turned your back on everything else. On the other hand, eight or nine months ago I saw a kid I used to know when we were 13-year-old punk rock skaterats. He's totally a redneck now and he's a racist and he's all these things that we supposedly hated back then—and he totally knows it.

I guess maybe it's best to be honest with yourself. You just hope that wasn't his honest side. You'd wish that the honest side would be the skater kid—although a lot of the skater kids I know these days are pretty racist and redneck.

It's true. I think racism in skateboarding has been replaced to some degree by homophobia and sexism and mysogyny. Looking through some skate magazines, you don't get the feeling gay people and women are very highly thought of. Not all magazines and skaters, of course, but enough to notice.

I think you make your friends when you're younger and as you get older you change and they change and either you become something else or they become something else. That's something that is really weird about being in a band. Everybody changes in the band and starts thinking differently and so forth. I don't know, I have a million friends that I don't talk to anymore because we just don't have anything in common anymore.

I've moved around a lot my whole life and was leaving behind a group of friends every couple of years and it certainly wasn't fun when it was happening, but I got to a point where I realized if I hadn't moved away, things would have deteriorated anyway as people got older. Like when you're 13, you're probably going to be very different in a short amount of time so leaving friends isn't really the end of the world. It doesn't change the fact that there was something very nice there while it lasted, but you've also have to understand that most relationships, of all kinds, have a lifespan that runs out.

And bands.

And bands, yes. A lot of bands don't seem to know this and continue to play and put out shitty records, when they actually should have stopped a long time ago. [Laughs] Kind of like athletes that should retire at a respectable point in their career but just don't.

Like Babe Ruth. He was at the peak of his career, and then he just progressively got worse and worse, and he tarnished his name. Everybody still respects him and will remember him as "The Babe" or whatever, but that doesn't change the fact that he got booted off The Yankees. There's a time to let it go and pursue other options. [Laughs]

Do you feel obligated to your fans in any way? This goes back to when we were discussing people being so critical and reactionary in this genre. Do you feel any drive to live by the expectations your fans may have for you?

You can't please everybody. Every single person that likes our band is really important to me, but at the same time we started this band for us, and not for anybody else. There has to be a healthy balance between the two. I think the obligation you have to your fans is the same obligation you have to yourself. Only do what you want to do to the best of your abilities; don't put out any filler; and do everything at 120 percent. ¶ When that first 7" came out on Doghouse, everybody was super nice and supportive of us, but the second that the album came out and it started getting bigger, this backlash started. That hurts me. You go through this period where you think nobody likes you and everybody thinks you're a dick or

to the best of your abilities; don't put out any filler; and do everything at 120 percent.

something. But kids keep coming to the shows anyway. Perhaps the people that talk the most shit are just the people who do zines or have computers. ¶ It's like in a regular job, if all you're trying to do is please your boss and not having any fun doing what you're doing than perhaps you're doing it for the wrong reasons. We're in a band because it's fun and it beats working. I feel obligated to us. But at the same time we try—as we've always tried—to write music that we like, therefore people that like the stuff that we like will like it. Does that make sense? That's always been our rule of thumb. But we're not going to put out a record of all electronic stuff or all country stuff even though those are things that I'm interested in. We've kind of dug ourselves a hole, but there's definitely room to move. Anything we really wanted to branch out and try, we'd probably use a different name. If you don't keep it fun and interesting, you're going to be making crappy records.

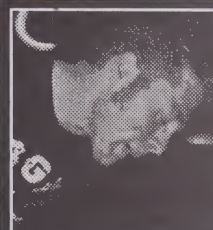
I think you're right on in saying that the biggest detractors happen to be the most vocal and it's probably not a fair cross section of what people think. Punk Planet gets much more negative mail than we do positive, but I think part of that may have to do with the fact that complainers are more likely to put pen to paper than are people who think things are fine.

For us, it's weird because we don't get criticized directly. It's all stuff we find on webpages about us. Or that guy that did that zine all about not liking us, didn't even send us one! If he's going to put that much effort into hating us, the least he could do was send us the zine and let us know he hates us. "I hate you and I'm going to tell everyone but you?" What's that all about? No one has ever, *ever* directly said to us, "You guys suck." I'm sure that will change someday, but nobody says anything directly to us. It's all stuff we hear about later, or find other places. On our Web page we have a guestbook and maybe one out of every 20 entries will be somebody saying he heard we were dicks or something but my e-mail address is on the webpage and nobody sends anything to me. That goes back to the whole thing we were talking about, people being unable to articulate what is good or bad about something. It's a lot easier to say "you guys suck" than it is to explain why you disagree with someone. It's easier to say "I heard those guys were assholes" than it is to ask us about what they heard. I guess some people are more interested in fanning the flames than finding out the truth about things.

Wasn't Fan the Flames that hardcore band side project you're in?

What? [Laughs]

Just something I read on the internet... ©



YOUR ROOTS ARE SHOWING!

Look what the Matt dragged in! Good sport "Metal" Matt shared with me his top five favorite heavy metal albums of all time. Sit around pretending to have a good laugh with your friends, all the while guiltily knowing these albums are in the back of your closet right now next to your old breakdancing cardboard and your Boy Scouts uniform.

Guns And Roses *Appetite For Destruction*

This is one of the best rock records ever written... period. I'm still in love with this record to this day. I don't think I would have wanted to be a musician if it hadn't been for this album. To quote Gilby Clarke, "it's a really heavy Rolling Stones."

Motley Crue *Too Fast For Love*

This is a great pop album, before they got too cheesy (songwriting-wise, they've always looked bad) they wrote great pop songs like "Public Enemy #1." This record will also teach you how to set your legs on fire onstage. I would also like to say that if anyone has the original Lethur Records version of this or the *Toast Of The Town 7"* that I would be more than happy to take them off your hands.

Metallica *Master Of Puppets*

I have to choose this particular Metallica record because it has "Battery" on it. I like this record and "Justice" because they are still abrasive and pretty tough but have some polish on them as well. After that they just sort of seemed to go overboard on the polish.

Poison *Look What The Cat Dragged In*

That's right... Poison... shut up! I was debating whether this was a metal record or not, but I went to three record stores over the weekend and they had this in the metal section. Anyone who didn't love this band at one point in their life is a fucking liar. I'm not sure if it's metal or not but "Talk Dirty To Me" is one hell of a pop song.

Slayer *Reign In Blood*

Do I really have to tell you why this is a great record... hello????

"IT'S IMPORTANT TO US TO HOPEFULLY HELP FULFILL PEOPLE'S DREAMS. THAT SOUNDS CHEESY, BUT DOING A LABEL WAS TOTALLY A DREAM FOR ME AND IF SOMEONE'S DREAM IS TO BE IN A BAND THAT PUTS OUT RECORDS AND CAN GO ON TOUR, IF WE CAN HELP THEM, THAT'S ALL I COULD ASK FOR."

RESIN RECORDS

Outside of Washington, DC, the name probably doesn't ring a bell for most people. What is Resin Records? A pseudo-collective micro-indie run by two guys more excited about helping people out and keeping punk rock fun than anyone I know. Two guys who's "aw-shucks" honesty isn't a gimmick to endear them or to push a manufactured "we're down with you, working class emo boy" label identity. Run out of the basement of their small Silver Springs, Maryland home, Carleton and Mike's focus is to simply be positive and do what they can with what they have for bands they love. On that alone, they are making an inspiring impact on their scene. Interview by **Jessica Hopper**

When did you start the label?

Mike: Carleton started it about three years ago.

Carleton: My first band, Grendel, wanted to put something out and it became apparent we weren't going to find anyone else to do it, so we did it ourselves. About two weeks after that, Mike and I started playing together in what is now The Better Automatic. And he started helping me out with the label. Mike was very excited. He was 16 or maybe 17 at the time and I was about 22.

M: I always wanted to have a label—that was a dream of mine from when I had first gotten into punk—and here was this great opportunity.

So, basically the impetus for the label was initially your own band and then it grew.

C: We both worked at the Fort Reno summer concert series. Chris from Chisel, the previous booker, was on tour, so we ended up booking there. Up until then, we had no idea about what was going on with the funding of Fort Reno. But once we realized it needed some money to keep things going, we decided to do a benefit album. That was going to be Resin's second release, but it took forever.

M: It took about year and half. All the bands on it had played Fort Reno—they were all local Maryland, DC or Virginia bands. It was really uplifting because everyone who had a hand in it was so excited about it—so excited to help. It wasn't like, "Oh another benefit comp." It was like, "Here

is a benefit album that's going to rock!" [laughs] It was wonderful because so many of those bands are not only great, but they are also people I really admire and respect—talented, talented people. It got me caught up in the excitement. It took us up and away from just doing a little label to put out the Grendel record. It made us a lot more aggressive, because *we had to* sell these because *we had to* help Fort Reno. Once that really started rolling, we wanted to continue that, to keep that feeling going with every release.

C: And we couldn't be slackers because all these bands we liked and respected had given us their energy and music. They all would ask, "when is it coming out?" It was like having 16 bosses all the sudden. [laughs]

M: It taught us how to make a record right.

C: And when the songs came in, *whew!* They were not crap comp songs. I feel like it was such a great way for us to start off. It was like making a mix tape for a thousand people—making a mix tape for the whole scene.

Did you grow up in DC?

M: Yeah. But we never met or even ran into each other, even though we were like five miles apart our whole lives. Since Carleton's older, we weren't really in the same age group or scene, but we were doing the same stuff.

So you can have those conversations where you were at the same show, but not together. But it's a shared experience, you may as well have known each other forever.

M: I have bonding experiences with people over first shows. Mine was Fugazi, Hoover and Slant 6. I showed up wearing a Soundgarden T-shirt and my hair was like this long afro. I wore ripped jeans. The whole time I kept asking my friends, "Is it going to get any louder?" I was so scared this one show would make me deaf. My parents had convinced me punk shows would make my ear drums blow up.

C: That happened to me at a Fugazi show for real. It was gross.

M: But you talk to people about your first show and they were there and they tell you about their first show and you're all, "Oh my God, you saw Rites of Spring!?" With "DC, it's awesome bonding over a shared legacy.



DC fascinates me in a weird way that is sort of attached to what you are saying. There is so much longevity and constants in the scene. Ian MacKaye has been in bands and putting out people's records since I was about two years old. Then you have people like J Robbins who is still playing in bands and helping out other DC bands with recording. DC has people like Cynthia Connelly, Kim Coletta, Tsunami, Jason Farrell—all still totally committed and involved.

C: All those people are still contributing to the community.

M: Without Kim, I don't think we'd even exist, honestly.

C: Every time we got worn down or every time we hit a wall, we'll call her and she'll say "Ok, your next step in running a competent label is..." And I go "Jeez, why didn't I think of that!?" [laughs]

M: Kim and other people have helped us immensely with no hesitation.

They don't horde information to keep you from imposing on their "label turf" or something.

C: I remember when I was in junior high—this is sort of an aside, so if it's boring, just go to sleep for a minute—Jason Farrell was this semi pro skater that *everyone* who hung out at ramps and stuff just worshipped. He was a junior or senior in high school then and in the 11 years since, he's still in a local band, doing graphics for Dischord and making films. He still has his DC allegiance.

M: It's so nice to grow up here. All the opportunities and things you can experience. I know you can make opportunities everywhere—you just have to set your mind to it—but here there's so much support. Getting into music, I just wanted to be involved and here were all these really amazing things for me to be involved with right off the bat.

A lot of people have said that you're making a "new" DC—a different style for DC. For years, you would hear people complain about DC being exclusionary and insular that there was separation—that was Dischord and then there was everyone else. That there was a lock on everything and getting shows for

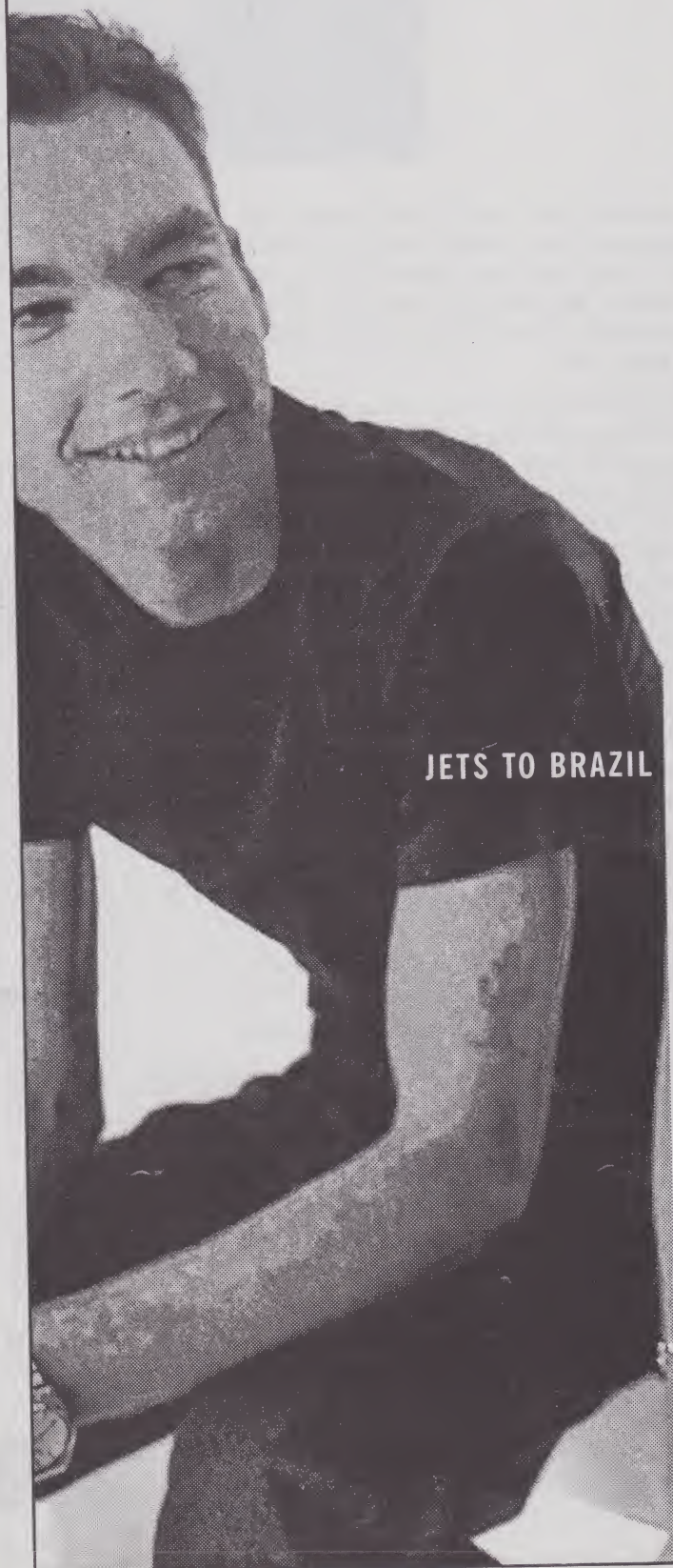
bands not "in the loop" was hard. Now it seems like in the past year or two, between you guys, DeSoto, Slowdime and Held Like Sound and Torpedo Dialogues zines, there's this new "baby" DC. Do you think this sprung out of a conscious effort to react to the way things were?

M: We are obviously inspired by the fact that we have been given a fair shot and given help and we just want to turn around and give that to the people around us. As a little aside, years ago I wrote this letter to Dischord—I must of been like 15. I wrote this mean letter about my little crappy high school ska band and all this and the scene and how I thought you had to be on Dischord to be a successful entity in DC. They wrote back and were so nice about it and so encouraging. It stuck with me. They are such a punk institution.

But at the same time a lot of their bands aren't really new DC bands, so it's good that there are labels like yours or Slowdime that can be homes to these new bands.

M: Wow, I hope that can be our role! Personally, it's important to us to hopefully help fulfill people's dreams. That sounds cheesy but doing a label was totally a dream for me and if someone's dream is to be in a band that puts out records and can go on tour, if we can help them, that's all I could ask for.

C: I never thought of DC—particularly Dischord or their scene—as being exclusionary. They just don't have the resources to put out records by everyone in town. When I first got into this stuff, there were all these local labels, like Simple Machines, Teenbear and Dischord and the kind of music I was playing didn't seem to really fit with any of those labels. But whenever I had questions or needed help with anything, I could call those labels—you could call all these strangers and get help from people who would just be excited and nice to you because you were doing something. If they can't help you by putting out your records or something, they are always a resource for you to help yourself. To me, that's the basis of independent music: thinking independently, doing things for yourself and sharing. ©



Expectations will always leave you feeling empty. And it will be your own fault. Ex this, Ex that, who cares. It's 14 months until the new millennium and things are sounding different already. And that is a good thing. Relocated, physically to New York and artistically to Jets To Brazil, Blake Schwarzenbach was kind enough to field a few of my questions about what he's been up to lately. Interview by Josh Hooten

Have you been doing a lot of interviews lately?

Just in the last couple of days. I've sort of forgotten how to do them. It's good, it's not such a routine.

With Jawbreaker having gone from press darlings to people being more critical of you guys towards the end, I'm curious how you feel about press at this point.

Well the only thing that's weird about it right now is that our record hasn't come out yet. Like I don't even think people know about this band, but I'm doing interviews. That's a little strange because it's all based on the past.

I imagine "ex-Jawbreaker" is a bit of a weight to carry. Do you think your past works more as a blessing or as a curse?

I would say a blessing, definitely. When the record comes out that could be entirely different, but it's certainly given us a lot of opportunities and created an interest that we would have had to work really hard to establish if we were just anybody. Fortunately I really like this band, so at that point I'm OK with people who were Jawbreaker fans liking or not liking this band.

My assumption was that the "ex-Jawbreaker" tag would work for you because people would grant whatever you do a level of validity based on your track record. But it could also work against you because people will automatically have expectations of what they think you should be doing now and what this band should sound like. My take on the record is that it will get mediocre reviews and in six months people will realize it's their favorite record. The record is definitely really different.

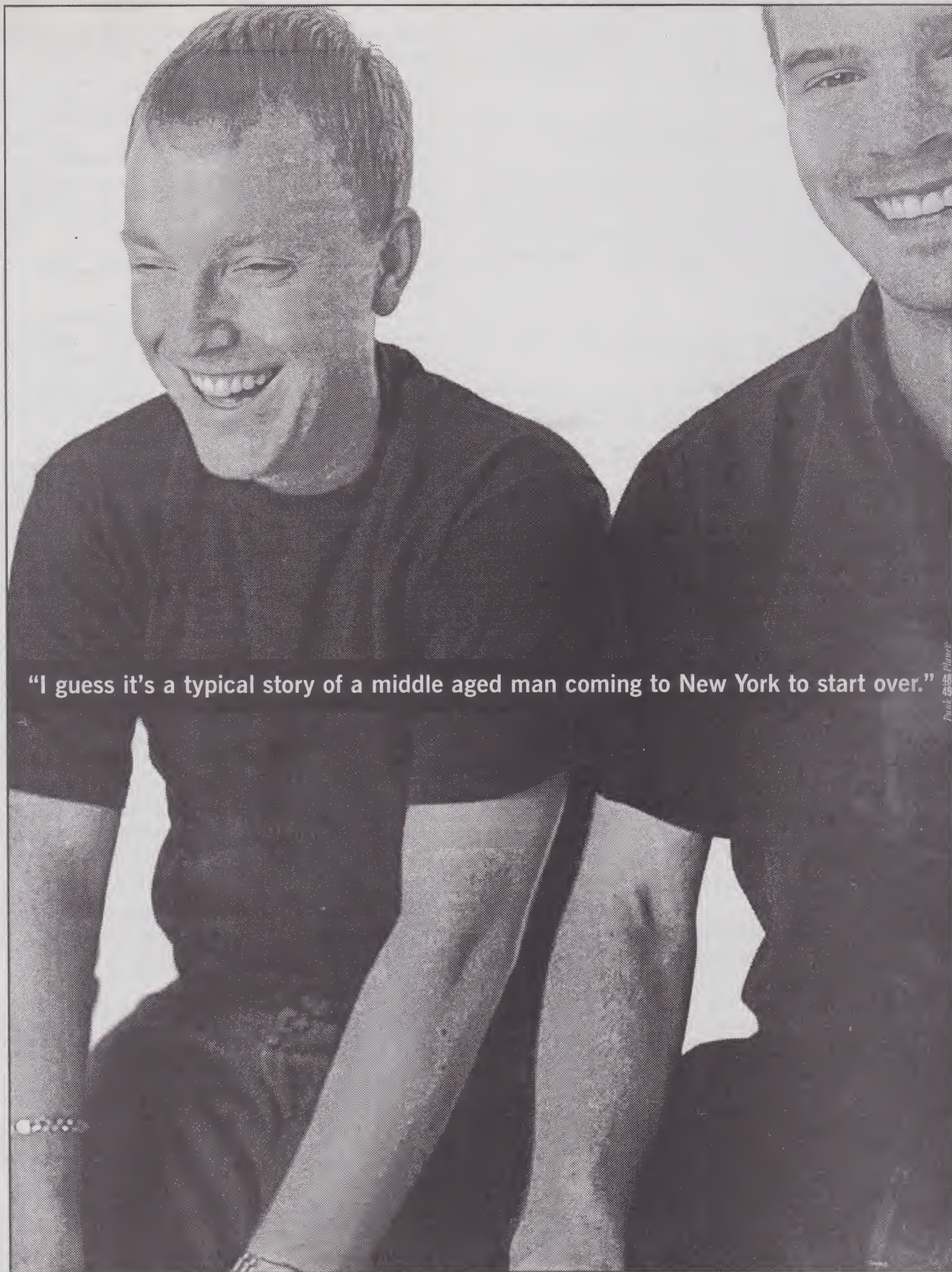
Well that's kind of the history of Jawbreaker, I think. That was definitely a pattern in that band. Records would come out to an air of apprehension, but in time people would like them more. I agree with you that this record may not be well liked right off the bat.

The new record functions on two levels for me. I like the music, and that's one level, but almost more important to me is your lyrics. The music didn't have to be all that good for me to think that it was a good record because for a long time now a lot of what you have written is much more about the lyrics than it is about the music, for me. That is one aspect that remains consistent through all of your work. It all feels like it's coming from the same starting point, and that's a point a lot of people seem to be able to relate to. Is there a difference in your approach from then to now?

In terms of writing, it is all coming from the same source. It still comes from a point of panic. Like with Jawbreaker, sometimes I felt I had to write all these songs or it was all over. That tends to lead to some bad songs. But perhaps somewhere in all of it there is something profound.

Do you feel you're existing in a sheltered creative environment? Do you put much stock into what your critics say, knowing your critics are perhaps mostly 15-20 year old middle class white kids who lack the ability to seriously critique your work?

I think everyone exists in a sheltered environment. Critics always have an agenda—even if you were an Algonquin writer, getting really



"I guess it's a typical story of a middle aged man coming to New York to start over."

inspired feedback. I mean you still have petty jealousies and weird alliances and all that. I tend to take criticism really seriously, from anyone, and it hasn't helped me one bit. So, I think being your own best critic is the ticket.

It seems like a lot of Jets To Brazil's songs are based on books. Is that something you've always done, or is that specific to now?

It's a little more open now. I would say some of the songs are inspired by books but not so much directly addressing those books. I think they are trying to address a presence in those books, in the way those books apply to my life. I think that usually what happens when you read a good book is that you feel like what's going on in the book is like what's happening right now.

I love it when that happens.

Yeah, especially with turn-of-the-century books. I find it happens more with those books than it does with current books.

I've become interested in the last six months or so in the idea of finding yourself in history somewhere—finding precedents for the things that you think and feel and perhaps finding comfort in the fact that you probably aren't an anomaly of the human experience. Where do you find yourself? What do you relate to in that sense?

Well, lately, biographies more than anything. I think that's definitely a '98 kind of state of mind. Everyone I know seems to be reading biographies now. I don't know if it's based on some need to feel like you're bettering yourself through historical study [laughs] disguised as entertainment, you know what I mean? I read a biography of Camus that was really exciting. That guy was under fire! I should actually say that was the inspiration of a song too. The song "Lemon Yellow Black." It kind of casually addresses French Resistance and turn-coatism. There's also a little part in that book about him making friends with cats and dogs wherever he went that I thought was really touching. [Laughs]

I heard that you relocated to New York to pursue your writing.

Yeah. I wanted to pursue *anything* non-musical. More than anything I wanted a job and I wanted to work and be tired. I had spent a lot of time in this musical limbo. Jawbreaker was able to support itself independently for a few years and later even more so through the Geffen deal. I really just wanted to come here and start over. I guess it's a typical story of a middle aged man coming to New York to start over.

Sounds like a book right there. [Laughs]

But then I fell back into it and started making music again. I really enjoy doing that.

Did you get there and realize getting a job and working wasn't all you thought it would be or did you just sort of start making music and realize you couldn't help it?

I think that making music is the work I wanted to be tired from. I found out I got a lot more energy from crafting these little songs and finding things that work. I got a charge from knowing I could still do it. I found there was a logic in it and I was working my brain in a way that I hadn't in a while. It felt clever. It felt exciting and I felt like I was getting at some other level with my writing. Plus, at the end of Jawbreaker there was a lot of bitterness—even inside the band—and I didn't just want to let it fizzle out like that. That's not how I wanted it to end.

When you make the move to doing a band full-time, it becomes a lot more involved than just sitting in your bedroom writing songs that satisfy your artistic side. There's all the periphery stuff like arranging to have mer-

chandise and setting up tours and doing interviews. It becomes a lot bigger than just songwriting. How do you marry those two worlds together?

I'm not sure how you go about striking a balance so you're happy with both. Occasionally those two worlds come together and it's great. You're up there playing songs that you love and you've got something to sell that is an extension of those songs. It's like "wow, this is my own little empire." It's a shitty feeling to be up there and have a bunch of people really into what you're doing and then have nothing for them. It's part of imparting your legacy I guess. I like it when there is something there for people to take home with them. I think selling your wares is a valid way to work as an artist.

If you had never become a musician, what do you think you would be doing with yourself?

I think because I'll do just about anything once I might be doing anything besides music. So many chance events and bizarre accidents have led me to where I am now—plus, in fairness, a certain determination on my part. It's pretty easy for me to imagine it derailing at any point. I might still be a librarian for all I know, maybe an assistant director by now with a salary. I really can't say, there's only what I'd like to do and not so much what I haven't done.

In what state of mind do you find you write your best stuff? There's a long history of people supposedly creating their best stuff under extreme pressure or turmoil and if that is a universal phenomenon, it doesn't bode well for anybody pursuing creative endeavors. In that sense, is being an artist a curse of sorts?

When you're defining yourself by what you do, something I imagine a lot of people doing, then I think you're bound to get hurt. I tend to do my best work on just the other side of desperation. There's a momentary grace after freaking out when things seem to come well-formed and ready. Like that endorphin surge that follows a crying jag—you've kind of bottomed out so it's all looking up. But, because there are absolutely no rules for this stuff, I've also been really productive when I've been happy and confident—drunk even! I think I produce lighter work in this state of mind, less ego-laden, simpler. I think the "curse" comes from thinking, "If I'm not creating, I'm dying." It's a very human, procreative sort of pathos.

Could you see yourself getting to a point and just thinking it wasn't worth the mental strain and stress to be a creative person and stopping? Getting to a point and just saying, "Fuck it. I'm going to be a dishwasher?"

I see dishwashing as a means of sustaining artistic hunger. Wash dishes for a week and see if you don't want to make a mess of some ideas.

Do you feel you are deferring your other interests by getting back into the full time band thing? If you do feel that way, you've probably been putting off your other interests for many years. Do you ever feel you're missing out on some things in order to do what you do?

When I'm in the throes of this thing I feel like I've sacrificed nothing, or would sacrifice anything to be where I'm at. I think the only thing I'm missing is a sense of home, of a secure base that I watch age gradually—and that's primarily because band and music life is so migratory and unfixed. You're up, you're down, people love you, people hate you, you're interesting, you're boring. I think you can develop a lot of quick and tenuous friendships being in a band and that's dangerous. But that's my whole life—moving, no house, no suburb—I've been in cities with different parents since I was four, so I don't really know that kind of security. ☺

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PENELOPE SPHEERIS

"...so I was totally free to shoot whatever I wanted.

Penelope Spheeris defined the punk film genre as the director of *The Decline of Western Civilization, Part I* and *Suburbia*. After completing those films and struggling in the film industry, she was able to make *The Decline of Western Civilization, Part II* about heavy metal. It was a hilarious exposé more than a sequel. Four years later, Penelope made *Wayne's World*, a monster worldwide hit. The smart and funny film deserved to be a hit, nailing pop culture square on the head. Post-*Wayne*, Penelope went on to make a string of stupid comedies. From my outsider's viewpoint, I thought that she had forgotten her punk roots and embraced Hollywood's artifice. All that changed when I saw *The Decline of Western Civilization, Part III*. No Hollywood asshole would make this movie. An intimate look at the homeless crusty punk scene, Penelope makes you empathize with these kids who on the outside seem drunk and obnoxious and scary. The film reminds us that these people are human and shows us what they go through in order to survive. Penelope understands the kids in the film and they trust her. *Decline III* is riveting, in-your-face and honest, just like Penelope. I got to meet Penelope at this year's Chicago Underground Film Festival and she was one of the fiercest, most honest, most passionate, toughest chicks I'd ever met.

Interview by Sarah Jacobson with Beth Ramona

Beth: When I saw *Decline III*, I went with some friends and we were drinking in the theater and we're laughing our heads off because everything seemed really funny, but then we started to get quieter and quieter.

That's what happens. There's a point right when they start talking about being homeless where all of a sudden you can feel the audience get hit in the stomach.

Beth: How did *Decline III* evolve from *I* and *II*? Was it like "This one will be about the gutterpunk scene," or was it something that just happened?

I think documentaries, if they're done right, have a life of their own and are quite organic. You get a vague idea of the subject when you're starting and then you're not in charge. It takes you. I did the film because [laughs] I saw some ad in the paper for some east coast band and it said, "The Decline of Western Civilization Part III." I said to myself, "Jeez, if they're ripping me off I better get going."

Beth: The first two *Declines* seemed to be more about the bands. But in the third one, it's the people that really come forward—honestly, I remember maybe a couple of the bands in the movie.

The music is not new anymore, obviously. I would be stupid to try to fake like there's a new musical moment going on. I think the second *Decline* did deal more with the fans than the first one did. The series is moving towards the sociological study as opposed to the musicology of it all.

Sarah: Which brings up an interesting point. What do you feel is the difference between the three movies?

Well, the first time I felt so passionate and so energetic about it. So much like, "This is my film. This is my subject." Nobody else could bring a camera into a club. I used to go up to people and say, "I'm sorry you can't film here." And they'd ask, "Why?" and I'd say "Because I'm making a movie about it!" [laughs] and they'd stop filming.

Beth: How old were you when you did the first one?

Twelve. [laughs] Nice try. I was older than they were, let's put it that way.

Sarah: When you started making films, were you a punk chick that was making films or you were someone who started making films and then discovered punk?

In '75 I had the first company in Los Angeles that did music videos, Rock and Reel. I did a whole bunch of jive-ass music videos for bands like the [stutters like a stoner] D-D-Doobie Brothers, Fleetwood Mac, David Essex and all kinds of old fucks.

Sarah: Were you involved with punk at all?

There wasn't any punk, this was in 1974-75. I had dropped out of music because it was disco heaven—I didn't even listen to the fucking radio. Then one day—I'll never forget it—I was standing in this equipment house checking out a camera to go shoot some video and this guy comes up to me and says, "You know what? You would like this band the Sex Pistols." And I said, "I'm not into music anymore, shut up." And that's when I first heard of the Sex Pistols. ¶ Right after that, I produced a feature film and I was on my way to becoming your basic normal mainstream Hollywood movie producer. I was asked if I wanted to produce *Private Benjamin*. I said, "You know what? I'm having too much fun going to these punk rock shows. So I'm gonna have to say forget it and go make a documentary about them." That's what changed my life.

Beth: So the people in *Decline I* were people you knew from the scene?



I figured I should give credence to the name of this series and also just tell the truth."

Yeah.

Beth: We were watching *Decline I* last year and this one guy sitting with us, was saying, "Oh that person is doing this. She's a teacher. He's doing whatever." I thought, that would be a really rad movie to re-do *Decline I* but show what all those people are doing now.

I don't think I could do that because a lot of them kind of have some grudge against the first *Decline*.

Beth: Why?

Because they think I made a lot of money on it and I didn't. They think I should have paid them. In their minds they equate notoriety with money. When the film came out, it was the most written about film of that year. But it didn't even pay for itself. I can't tell them that because they don't believe it. For me to call up Excene or Greg Ginn, I'm sure they probably wouldn't talk to me because they think I took their money, but I didn't.

Sarah: What about *Decline II*?

Did *Decline II* make any money? Well, it's owned by New Line, you can ask them. I certainly didn't make any money on that movie. I think I made like \$35,000 as a directing fee. Next to my normal fee of \$3.5 million, it kind of blows. [laughs]

Beth: In *Decline II* were the people interviewed paid for their interviews?

I think for legal purposes, they had to pay them some minor amount. I paid the kids in *Decline III* \$50 a piece to do an interview.

Beth: When the second *Decline* came along and you had to call people you didn't necessarily know personally, were they open?

Yeah. They had seen the first film and they had respect for it. Plus, I had these producers that made all the calls, 'cause I'm not going to be calling up fucking Steven Tyler...

Beth: ... or Paul Stanley.

Yeah. "Hey Paul, would you go lay in the bed with a couple of chicks there?" [laughs]

Beth: So for *II*, you had people do the calling for you. For *III* I'm assuming it goes back to you meeting kids on street.

I paid for this film myself with money that I made hooking—I mean making studio movies—so I was totally free to shoot whatever I wanted. I figured I should give credence to the name of this series and also just tell the truth. In my opinion, it's all just going down the fucking toilet.

Beth: I agree with you there but at the same time it seems like in the punk scene, there's always been the people who are the instigators—the creators, the bands, the fanzines, the DJs—and then there's the drunks and slackers who just go and cause trouble.

Like any other part of society?

Beth: Right. But I think that those people, like the people in the movie, are just kind of non-inspired...

I think the first film was there for a reason. Punk was kind of like the first hippie movement—"We can change the world." It's a beautiful delusion. When a new generation comes along, I think it is their innate urge to try to change the world to suit themselves and to make it apply to themselves. Unfortunately, the generations who came after the baby boom generation were so much smaller in number that they've had to fight really hard. So to make a stamp on the world, they had to be very extreme to be noticed and to try to change things. I think things were changed to a degree, but unfortunately the way that I see the change that's most obvious is in visuals—stupid superficial things like fashion.

Sarah: How did you approach the kids in *Decline III*? Did you just get out of your car and say "Hi, I'm Penelope!"

A lot of times they would be on the street and I would film them from across the street and they wouldn't know I was shooting them. Then I would drive up, get out of my car and still keep filming them. They were like, "What are you doing? We get paid for that." And I said, "Well, I'm doing the *Decline Part III*." And they would go, "You can't do that, that's Penelope Spheeris' film." And I'd be like, "Well that's me." And they'd go, "No way! No, really? Really? Wow, yeah, OK!" They knew the other films. Once they knew it was me, they were cool.

Sarah: Do you think that helped them trust you?

Yeah. I don't think there would be any other way to do it. It wasn't just the *Decline* films. Most of them were very familiar with *Suburbia* and even *The Boys Next Door* and *Dudes*. When I was shooting, they would



stand behind me and quote my other movies just to fuck with me.

Beth: There's one scene in *Decline III* where all the kids are sitting around eating burgers and drinking from a keg. We were wondering if...

I didn't buy the keg. I bought the food though. When I first started filming I thought, "You know, these kids, shit man, they ain't got nothing else to do but sit and drink, so I'll buy 'em a couple of beers." About a week into filming I went, "Wait a minute! I need to buy them food, not beer." I stopped buying beer and started buying food and I gave them money. Profits from this movie go to shelters for homeless and abused kids.

Sarah: What brought about your approach for *Decline III*. You said earlier that it was more of a sociological study than a music film.

In different times in your life you feel different ways about the world. I don't believe that there's a person that when they're a teenager thinks about life and God and the reason we're here in one way and keeps that thought through their whole life. Back in those days I guess I, along with a lot of other people, were more into trying to be cool and hip and outrageous. When I was in that whole scene, I was always the freakiest person around. Then as time goes on you go, "Shit, I don't have to be freaky, I don't have to prove anything." And now, when I did *Decline III* it has more to do with more substantial issues. When you get older you go, "Wait a minute. There's big problems in the world. What can I do, knowing what I know and doing what I do?" I said to myself, "I'm a filmmaker with some accomplishment. What can I do to at least make people aware and try to change the world a little bit?" ¶ It seems, to me anyway, this is the tip of the iceberg. Ten to twenty years from now, there's gonna be fucking huge packs of kids out there wandering around with no place to live and nothing to eat.

Sarah: It sounds like *Suburbia* come to life. On a related note: I took a poll on the Internet on "What's the Punkiest Movie Ever?" 90 percent of the time the answer was *Suburbia*. It's almost become this rite of passage. I remember being 14 years old and getting into punk going through this ritual of getting drunk at someone's house watching *Suburbia*. How did that movie happen?

I couldn't get any good distribution for *Decline I* and the reason they kept giving me was because it was a documentary. So I said, "Fine, I like the subject matter. I'm gonna make one that's not a documentary. I'm gonna make a dramatic piece on the same subject." I wrote the script and was

able—through Roger Corman and some dude from Cleveland—to get the money together. ¶ After *Suburbia* I did *The Boys Next Door*. That didn't do very well because it went back and forth from the MPAA rating board like ten times because of the violence—which was ridiculous because it wasn't even that violent. But it was a woman making it and it was a low budget thing and they just didn't want it out there. ¶ After that, I couldn't get a job. I was offered this dumbshit film called *Hollywood Vice Squad*. My agent said to me, "Where the hell else are you gonna make \$50,000 Penelope?" He was absolutely right. I was starving to death. I did the movie and got \$50 grand. That movie fucking blew weenies—after that I really couldn't get a job. ¶ Finally I got *Dudes*. *Dudes* is a cool movie. Fleas in *Dudes* and Lee Ving is in *Dudes*, but again it bombed. It did good in fucking Australia, thank you.

Sarah: Jon Cryer was in *Dudes*, right?

Yeah. I didn't wanna use him, but I had to because the producers forced me.

Sarah: It's so funny, Jon Cryer as a punk!

Oh, I know, it's so wrong! In this business, they're scared. They don't want things to be too edgy, they want the appeal and then they fuck it up. After *Dudes*, I got a call from Miles Copeland at IRS records. He said, "Is there any movie you'd really like to do?" And I said, "Yeah, the *Decline Part II* about heavy metal." So he said, "Well, gee, Heavy Metal's doing pretty well, let's do it!"

Sarah: So if you had a deal for *Decline II*, what's up with the distribution of *Decline III*?

I have no distribution for *Decline III* because with the offers I've been given I should just tattoo "DUH" on my forehead. The offers are like, "Okay we'll distribute *Decline III* theatrically if you give us the video rights to all three *Declines*."

Sarah: No way!

I know. "How 'bout I just write you a check for my entire bank account?" Basically right now, me and my friend Steve are distributing it ourselves. We just opened it in San Francisco for a week and it kicked ass, thank God.

Sarah: Is a lot of your personal time going into distributing the movie?

Yeah. I was seriously thinking about taking all the shit in my garage and setting a bonfire and then just setting up a couple of computers in there and just hiring a couple of people to distribute it myself.



Sarah: In a way, that process...

...matches the film.

Sarah: Exactly. It blows my mind that distributors don't see the potential in *Decline III*.

It's either, "give me a great offer or I'll do it myself."

Sarah: Distribution is so much work.

I know. Unless you are hooked up with some big monster corporate company that can front you a bunch of money for your distribution, you might as well do it yourself. Just like in society how there is no more middle class, there are no more middle level distributors that can survive without totally ripping you off. You either have to go grassroots or big time. The big time people have not beaten my *Decline* door down, so I guess it's grassroots.

Sarah: I've noticed that what used to be a safety net for the more interesting films is now corporate special interest money. Being on the festival circuit last year, I saw a lot of really good movies that are aimed towards younger people and are more punk, but they don't know how to distribute that, they're not in touch with that audience.

Not at all. And there are a lot of those people out there, too.

Sarah: Your involvement with punk, did that inspire you at all to distribute *Decline III* yourself?

No. Necessity is the mother of invention. I had no choice. I mean, I don't want to do it. It's not my first choice to do it because it's a shitload of time, a shitload of hassle and it probably won't make any money. But I care about the film so much, I can't just kiss it off and let some asshole take it, do it wrong and rip me off.

Sarah: If all your dreams came true and you were making exactly the kind of movies you want to make, what would it be?

I'd like to make porno movies. [laughs] Just kidding. I would probably be doing one of the eight scripts I've written that I can't get produced. Or I would be directing some of these great scripts that I've read that can't get made because people in this town have shit taste. It is not my goal to do \$60, \$80, \$100 million movies because I think it's indulgent and it's obscene in a world where people are starving to death. To make a movie that costs \$100 million is a complete ego jerk off. I couldn't morally do that. ©

Decline III: Another View

By Jim DeRogatis

Undeniably moving, it took me a while to figure out exactly why I was bothered so much by *The Decline of Western Civilization, Part III*.

In the first *Decline*, Spheeris simply filmed some of L.A.'s best hardcore punk bands doing their thing when they were at the height of their powers. You couldn't go too wrong showing X and the Germs performing live in 1979.

Much more problematic was 1988's *Decline, Part II*. The film mocked then-up-and-coming hair-metal bands as well as veterans such as Ozzy Osbourne and Alice Cooper. It was exceedingly superficial, and Spheeris showed no understanding of the genre or the differences between poseurs like Poison and more underground thrash bands.

It was only a short leap from there to the big-time comedy *Wayne's World*, in which the same people Spheeris sneered at in *Part II* made her rich.

In the self-financed third *Decline*, Spheeris tries to re-establish herself as a serious documentary maker, reconnecting with the punk audience. She's undeniably proficient, and her account of homeless alcoholic gutterpunks is wrenching.

As well it should be: She is, after all, a Hollywood pro. In fact, she's so good at pulling the heart strings that it takes a while to realize she's just Barbara Walters in black bondage gear or Jerry Springer in drag.

Her favorite question, asked in numerous interviews: "Did that make you sad?"

This is posed to kids who weren't even born when Spheeris made the first *Decline*. They relate how their parents kicked them out of the house; how they sleep in bushes and condemned squats; how they begin to see "the detox gremlins" if they don't start drinking when they wake up; and how they're sure they'll never live to hit 25.

They survive by "spanging"—hitting people up for spare change—or posing in photos for tourists amused by their spiked hairdos, nose rings and filthy clothes. Not surprisingly, these dispossessed kids have no time to be sad: They're too busy trying to survive. The fact that they are such strong, funny, inspiring and likable characters—the heart of what's good about the film—has everything to do with them and their will to live and very little to do with Spheeris's voyeuristic approach to filming.

The tip-off is that Spheeris never explores why these kids label themselves "gutterpunks" instead of "homeless" or any other appellation. They take the name with pride because punk rock is one of the few factors in their lives that offers hope, transcendence, escape—and yes, catharsis for their anger, which is the only feeling Spheeris allows them.

Unlike her earlier films, *Decline, Part III* features only little-known bands. On one level, the music of groups like Final Conflict and Naked Aggression (whose lead guitarist recently died of an asthma attack) is thoroughly generic and forgettable. Spheeris treats it that way, jokingly adding subtitles to spell out the lyrics.

But she never asks the gutter punks what the music means to them. Naked Aggression is no Black Flag, but in the explosion of energy at their shows, the kids find a reason for living, if not a fleeting scrap of heaven.

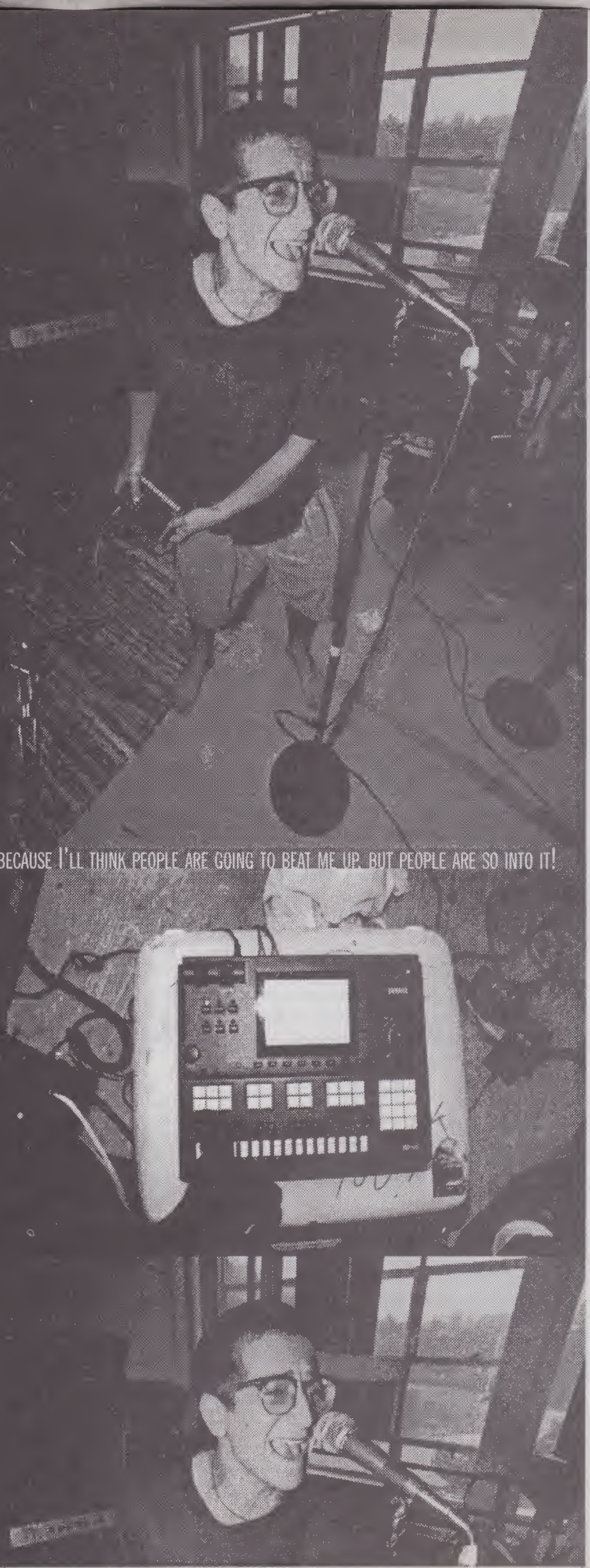
That doesn't translate well on film because the audience is as much a part of the performance as the band. Even if she was in the center of the pit, Spheeris couldn't capture that with her camera and since she never asks the question, it goes unsaid.

Quite a lot goes unsaid, actually. Throughout the movie there's a lot of talk about Nazi skinheads who terrorize the "good" street punks, but none of the bad guys are interviewed or even seen. And though there's a note at the end that all profits will benefit organizations that help these homeless teens, there's no indication in the film of any external support whatsoever. What organizations?

Thankfully, the director steers clear of the one area that would have made the movie even more exploitative than it already is. One of her favorite interview subjects, a young punk named Squid, was stabbed to death in July, 1997, by a young girl named Spoon, who also gets a lot of screen time.

The particulars of this real-life "Sid And Nancy" remain on the cutting-room floor, though if you really want to be cynical, that might just be because Spheeris concluded a year of filming before the story was nailed and Spoon was convicted.

Given the opportunity to make the punk *Titanic*, is there any doubt that Spheeris would have stopped short? As it is, *The Decline of Western Civilization, Pt. III* sinks for entirely different reasons. ©



I'LL BE AT A SHOW AND BE NERVOUS ABOUT PLAYING BECAUSE I'LL THINK PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BEAT ME UP. BUT PEOPLE ARE SO INTO IT!

atom and his package

ATOM GOREN was supposed to be a neuroscientist. Instead, he drives around the country in his mother's sport utility vehicle, warming up the crowds before bands like Spazz and Black Army Jacket with endearingly juvenile synthesizer pop that he insists is not a cross between Weird Al and Chumbawamba. With his beloved QY700 sequencer (AKA "The Package," a cross between a computer and a keyboard), he composes and sings anthems about perennial topics of punk concern: owning horrible records, surviving high school and why the metric system is vital to this country's future. To some, that sounds like a recipe for disaster. For others, it sounds like fun. The man behind the Package talks about why a sequencer is better than a dog, the Cleveland Dildo Crew and the unbearable lightness of being Atom.

Interview by Chris Ziegler photos by Shawn Scallen

So I think something the people really want to know...

...am I as really as big an idiot as I appear?

I see you know how these interviews work.

I've had people write me and say, "Are you really as big of a dork as I think you are?" And it's hard for me to judge that, because I don't know how big of a dork they think I am. I mean, I have some dorky qualities but I'm not just some stupid kid.

Then it's true that the brain that produced lyrics like "I was fighting the mold in the bowl with my pee" has been formally trained in neuroscience?

This is true. I also have a master's degree, so goddammit, you can't call me stupid! [laughs] I don't think of myself as a dumb guy at all. There are some people who I meet who are weird—they're not the people who are acting weird, that are "Ooo, look at me!"—They're the people who are genuinely dorky and weird. I don't really think I'm like that. I think I'm actually a pretty normal person. I'm not like a Magic: The Gathering guy with a goatee and a trenchcoat.

How did a normal guy like you end up making a career out of something so abnormal?

I had a lot of time on my hands, obviously. I had graduated college and the band I was in [Fracture] broke up. I was home and I didn't have a job for a while and I basically just sat around and wrote tons and tons of songs. It all started off as a joke—I wrote these songs for my friends, to make them laugh and something went wrong. [laughs] I had set up a tour for my friend's band, Franklin, and since I set it up, I said "I'm coming with you; I will tag along." And they said, "Oh, you should bring your thing, you could play a song before we play." So I did that and the audience would just stand there and stare at me until I would shut up. ¶ When I came back to Philadelphia, I'd written a ton of songs, so I said, "Well, I'll just play a show here in Philly." Whenever Franklin would play, I would just barge on and play too. So then it got to the point—somehow—where people would just ask me for shows and I'd play them.

Private engagements? Like Bar Mitzvahs and stuff?

I have played two weddings. This guy I knew through friends of friends was getting married and he asked me to play. That's where the idea came from for the Packettes, which are three of my friends that do background dancing and dress up and look stupid and have these choreographed dances for a lot of the songs. We practiced for this wedding and it wasn't quite as amazing as we thought it would be. We did that Mad Lib song where I ask audience members for nouns and verbs and use them for the lyrics. I went up to this woman and I asked for an adjective and she looked me right in the face and said, "Horrible!" None of the adults liked it at all and young people came up to me and said, "Was the point of that so you couldn't understand anything you were saying?" But I think the

people who were actually getting married kind of liked us. In retrospect, it was pretty funny. [laughs] But I don't know if I'm going to continue to do this in front of my friends and their parents.

When you're not playing weddings, how do people react when you perform? I know you play with a lot of bands that wouldn't seem to mesh too well with synth pop—are crowds ever offended that this dorky guy is running around on stage and sabotaging the dignity of their emo or power violence show?

You'd be pretty surprised. I'll be at a show and be nervous about playing because I'll think people are going to beat me up, but people are so into it! At that Spazz/Brutal Truth show I played in Philadelphia—that was one of the first shows I played in Philadelphia that was not just for my friends—people were really, really into it—minus one who called me "retarded Sesame Street music." There are people who don't like it, I completely accept that. This is definitely not something for everybody. This band Candy Machine played a bunch with Franklin and I played with them a couple times. They would always complain and say, "God, why do you get this guy to do this? He's so goddamn annoying!" Even when people hate it, usually I'm quick enough to kind of make fun of them. Really creative hecklers are few and far between. I played in Cleveland once and did the Mad Lib song and for everything—noun, adjective, verb, gerund—everyone said "Dildo. Dildo." So the entire Mad Lib was, "My friend dildo was dildoeing with a dildo." Even if people don't like it, if I'm in a good mood it doesn't bother me at all. It gives me the right to be obnoxious.

But what if you're not in a good mood? Do you ever feel you have to be "on" all the time?

I do, and that's why it really sucks if I'm not. For the most part, I'm totally into it, it's just once in a while I'll have a bad day and not feel like making an idiot out of myself in front of a lot of people. When I was in a band, it was much different. If I was in a bad mood—which I was a lot being in a van on tour and all—it didn't matter. I wasn't the singer and I didn't have a microphone. All I had to do was play. But for this, it's all me. It's not like I can say, "Ahh, I'm not going to do anything for this show because I'm tired or bored or something." As much about punk rock as this is about, it's also about entertainment. If I just went and sat down on the stage and sang songs, it wouldn't be entertaining for anybody.

What's it like being in a band with an inanimate object instead of human beings?

I liked being in Fracture so much because of the other guys. They were my best friends. When we'd go on tour, it was like us against the world—us and all the other punk rock people. But when I tour, for a good amount of the time, I'm by myself driving around in my mom's car. One time, I thought it would be good if I got a dictaphone and I would talk to myself in the car and have great ideas about stuff and sing songs and do funny lyrics. And that happened for about the first three days and then I actually listened to it and it was horrible. It was just, "OK, I'm starting the trip, OK—Connecticut driver 6MZ-129 is a jerk. He cut me off." The ratio of bad stuff to good stuff was like 600 to 1.

How's the sequencer as a substitute for live band mates?

He's a friend of mine, he's very nice. I love it, I have a really good time and I can play with him for hours.

What level do you think your relationship with him is at? Is he like a pet, a younger sibling, a peer, maybe even something more?



You talk the talk, but do you walk the walk? How much do you really use the metric system in your life?

It's less work than my dog, in that I don't have to do anything with it if I don't want to. It's definitely more fun than my dog. I love my dog, but you pet her for a while and it gets boring after a couple minutes.

What's with the song demanding we embrace the metric system?

It's completely idiotic that we use the system that we use in this country. It's not consistent and it doesn't make any sense at all. People whine and say, "But we're used to it!" That's ridiculous! It's broken and it needs to be fixed! This country should have something to be proud of!

You don't think it's sort of romantic that us and Zaire are the only two countries that still stick to the English system?

No. It's sad and it's embarrassing!

You talk the talk, but do you walk the walk? How much do you really use the metric system in your life?

I do the best I can in a sickening society like this. When I go to the doctor and they ask for my weight, I give it to them in kilograms and they don't know what I'm talking about. They say, "What do you mean you weigh 80?" In the car, when the speed limit says 55, I drive 55 kilometers—which is really really slow. I got pulled over once and the cop said "What are you doing?" And I said, "I was driving 55." "No, you were going about 20." "No, I'm driving 55 kilometers per hour." You know how that goes, I got a ticket and I fought it and I lost.

It sounds like that just kind of fueled the fire.

Yes, I'm very angry. It's bleak. Punk people who you'd consider to be open minded whine about it. They say, "Well, we're already using this system." Well, that system's wrong! But it's gotta start somewhere.

That seems to be your signature song. What else do people like?

People like the black metal song a lot, but I don't know if I like doing that song because I read this book and apparently they're all white power people. I feel horrible that I wrote that. I mean, it's not like people will think, "Ooh, Atom likes black metal. We must go like black metal." But I feel bad I wrote the song.

Do you actually have much of a black metal collection?

Oh my god, yeah. I've given these horrible people hundreds of dollars!

How are you going to atone for that?

I wrote this column in a zine about which bands are the evil dudes—actually, they're all evil. I told people who the *really* evil guys are and then said, "This is a list of what I have and if for some reason you want to get into the music, then I'll make you a tape of it."

Any response?

Nope. But that's just as good, I guess.

That's interesting, because for presenting yourself as such a goofy, funny guy, you're not apolitical. For instance, you've got that song "Hats Off To Halford" where you praise Rob Halford from Judas Priest for coming out of the closet. How does it work when your punk politics trickle over into these poppy songs?

I do the best I can in a sickening society like this.

I definitely have very strong beliefs about certain things and they're certainly going to come through. I don't mean to sound conceited or toot my own horn because I don't think I'm making any big breakthroughs, but in a song like "Hats Off To Halford," it's a way—and maybe I'm overanalyzing the seriousness of the song—of writing an anti-homophobic song but not saying [growls] "You idiots! You think gay people can't live with you? You are stupid!" Humor is definitely an effective way of making a political statement and I think it may be more acceptable to people if it comes from that method. Is that completely pretentious?

I've heard worse.

It is horribly pretentious and it's a fun song and all, but it does definitely have a political view. I think the music that I do is pretty accessible—it's not loud or like "ragarragh," like one of those bands, so it's reaching a different crowd—but then I can't imagine like jocko dickheads going around saying, "This Atom and his Package CD rocks!" Still, no matter what anyone does, they're going to reach some people that another band isn't, so that's good.

Do you ever feel constrained by the Atom and his Package persona, though? Like you can't let yourself do anything that's not funny?

Definitely. A friend of mine put out this 7" and it has an old Fracture song that I wrote lyrics to and I redid the music. It's not a funny song at all. It's pretty straightforward and I would say it's almost sappy and corny and an emo song. I was really interested to see what people would think of that, if they would be like "What are you trying to do? We like you because you're funny. Stop being serious." I haven't got very much feedback about that song. I don't know if that's because it's out of print already and no one has it or if people don't like it. I imagine that a lot of people like the songs because they're funny and dorky and stupid, but I imagine there must be some people out there who think they're good songs too. It's not something that I worry about, that no one's going to take me seriously. I don't really have like an agenda...

Except the metric thing.

Well, yes, definitely, but not a musical agenda where I have these certain things I want to do. It's a personal agenda. I was talking to a friend of mine and he said "What do you think would happen if you wrote a serious song, a song that addressed a serious issue like rape or something like that?" I don't know. It'd be actually kind of interesting to see. Ten billion bands in a row at a punk show say, "This is a song about racism, it sucks, blah blah blah. This is song about sexism, it sucks too." I'm not saying don't say that stuff, that it's not important, but I just think that if you're making a statement on stuff, a lot of the times people don't even listen to it.

In the notes on your *Behold, I Shall Do A New Thing 7"*, you mention the Dead Milkmen and how you think they got a lot of heat for being a funny band. Does that connect to this?

I think they're really underrated and some of their songs are just kick ass good pop songs. The Dead Milkmen are one of the few bands that I listened to when I was thirteen that I can listen to today and say, "Wow, that's a good song!" People say, "Oh, it's funny... 'Bitchin' Camaro'... they have that song with the word 'fuck' in it a lot." A lot of people wrote them off because they sing funny lyrics sometimes.

Are you saying that people think music can be funny or serious, but not both?

I don't know if anyone would come out and say that, because that's kind of silly, but it might be the case in a lot of things. It's not that the punk community is at fault or the band is at fault, but in a lot of cases it is true. Anal Cunt is a band a lot of people think of as funny, but they are by no means a band people could say is musically good. The songs are basically just [makes a roaring sound] and they have really, really funny song titles, but the songs aren't all that much to listen to. There are a lot of funny bands where their gimmick is that they're funny and their music sucks. I wouldn't say that anyone has said, "Funny bands will be funny and not good," but I think for a lot of kids that's true.

Does that imply that people think you're funny but not good?

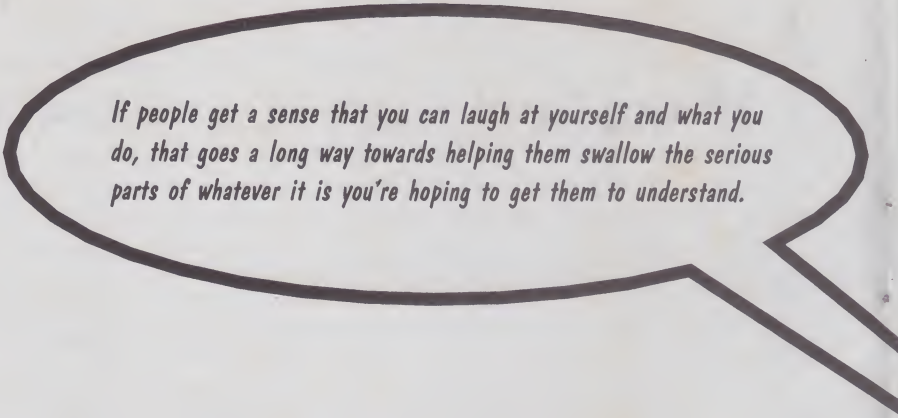
People say it's this total novelty and people like it for that, and I definitely accept that a good number of people will buy one CD and go see it live because it's funny and entertaining, but they're not wholeheartedly into it. I acknowledge that a lot of people like it for the novelty and I think I get a lot of attention from a lot of zines and stuff because it's a novelty. But I do think there are some people who genuinely like the music. When people say that people are going to get really bored of it tomorrow, part of me says, "Yeah, a lot of people will." But at the same time, I think there are some people who will still like the music and the songs and stuff. I've always kind of had the thought in the back of my mind that this is going to fall apart in a couple of weeks—people will get bored of it and that will be that. I'm really taking it one step at a time. I love doing music and I'm not going to stop, but when it stops, it stops. It'll suck because I'll have to get a real job.

So you do this full time?

Yeah! I don't have a job, I just go around and play stupid shows and have fun. In the beginning, I didn't expect anything out of it—just to make my friends laugh, or whatever. I never even expected that I'd play a show. Whenever my friends were on tour, I'd send them a tape of a stupid song I wrote about them or something like that. Now, I'm going on tour for the next three months. This is everything that I ever loved to do. I love traveling, I love meeting new people through this punk rock stuff that we're doing. What more could I expect?

What do your parents think of all this?

They're very supportive but they don't understand what I'm doing at all. I gave them copies of the CD—I censored it; I crossed out some pictures and crossed out some words—and they said, "This is really really good, Atom!" And I said, "Oh, that's nice! Did you think it was funny?" And they were trying to look at me to see if my eyes or face was giving some sort of signal of whether it was supposed to be funny or not and they said, "Um, is it supposed to be?" And I said, "Just a little bit." And they said, "Oh, it was funny!" So I don't think they really understand it all. My dad's a doctor and loves the idea of the metric system, but I don't know if he likes the guitar—he thinks it's a little loud. ☺



If people get a sense that you can laugh at yourself and what you do, that goes a long way towards helping them swallow the serious parts of whatever it is you're hoping to get them to understand.

NEGATIVLAND

Best known for their ritual conflicts with the music establishment, there are very few groups who have achieved Negativland's level of controversial political notoriety and still managed to survive. Starting out almost 20 years ago in the San Francisco suburb of Concord, Negativland have evolved into the most well-recognized proponents of copyright infringement. Don't let that fool you though, because it's not the whole story. Negativland's work is far more eclectic, hard-hitting and humorous than their well-known ideological program suggests. Coming out of a tradition of cut-up music, Negativland's artistic distinction lies in their being credited with having defined collage music as a seemingly "new" rock genre.

¶ This interview, with Negativland member Mark Hosler, is presented in two parts. The first part was held shortly after Negativland was informed that their most recent CD, *Pastor Dicks' Dumb Stupid Come Out Line* was being held at the pressing plant due to new regulations regarding music pirating issued last year by the Recording Industry Association of America. The second part of the interview finds Negativland on much surer footing, having prevailed in their dispute with the RIAA. What ensued in the two interviews were extremely engaging discussions about American politics, the independent music business, the new collage aesthetic infecting rock and roll, and of course, last but not least, Negativland. Interview by **Joel Schallit**

Part I

Mark makes squeaky-toy noises over the phone.

What was that?

This is actually a squeaky rubber reindeer from Australia. I spoke there after a showing of Craig Baldwin's film *Sonic Outlaws* and said "I'd like to introduce you all to my friend from America. This is Mr. Squeaky Carrot." Then I said, "This is a new friend that I've just made. He's from Australia. He's Mr. Australian Rubber Reindeer," [makes squeaky noise] Then I had them meet. They started hitting each other and squeaking very loudly and I said "Oh they're not getting along very well. They don't like each other." Then I said, "OK, now I can answer all your serious questions."

How did the crowd react?

The audience was laughing. I didn't do that when I appeared with the Australian showing of the documentary on advertising that we did the soundtrack for [*The Ad And The Ego*] because that had a broader audience than a Negativland audience. But the *Sonic Outlaws* audience was definitely a bunch of art weirdos, so I thought it was fine to bring out the squeaky carrot for them. When you're speaking publicly, if people get a sense that you can laugh at yourself and what you do, that goes a long way towards helping them swallow the serious parts of whatever it is you're hoping to get them to understand.

People don't want to be browbeaten.

No. If they can see that you can laugh about it and that you enjoy what you do, then they'll be more receptive to what it is you have to say.

I think that's one of the reasons why Negativland has been more effective in communicating its agenda than most political bands.

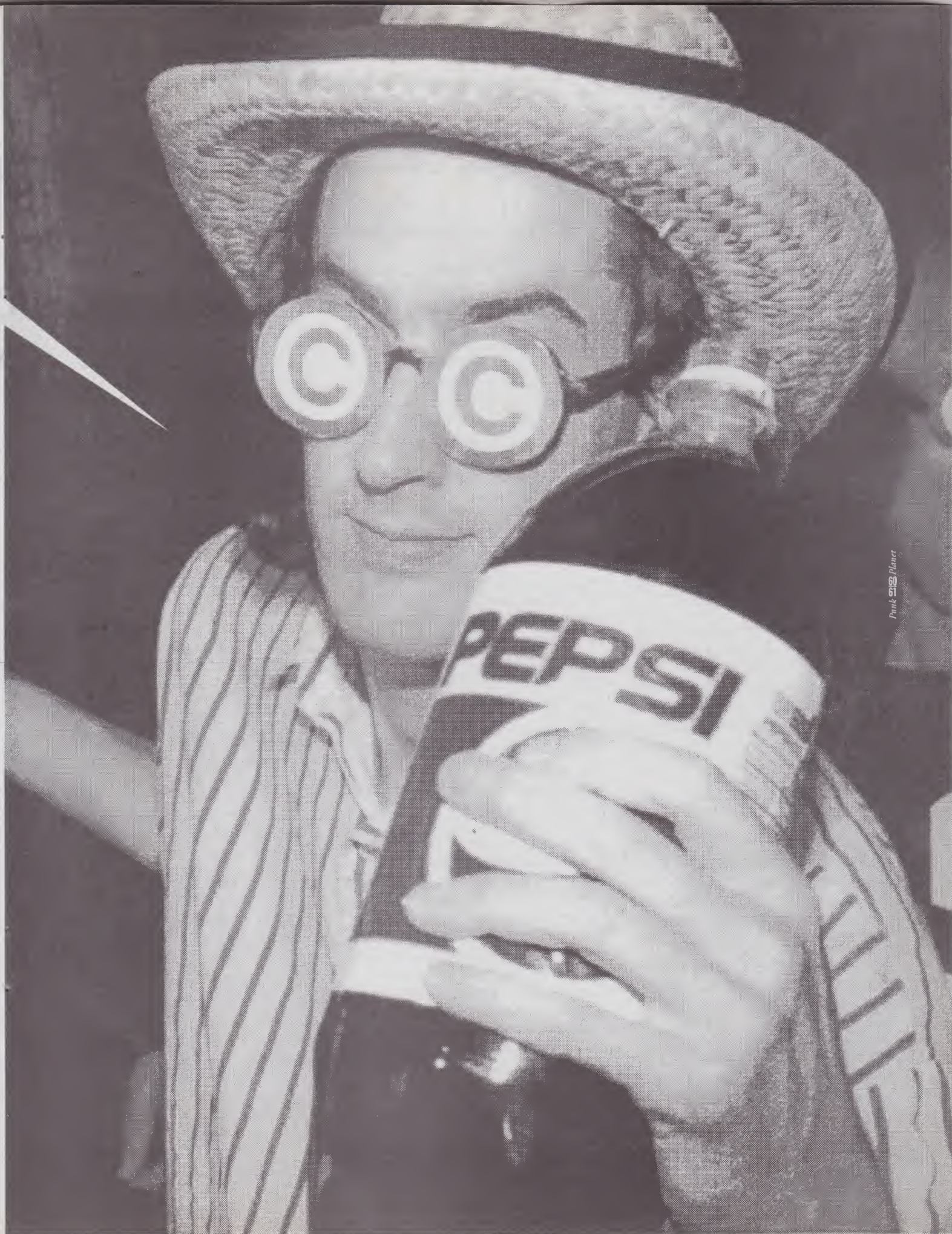
Our humor is not contrived though. We're just like that anyway, it's just our nature. But it just so happens that if you do deal with pretty serious topics and you do it in a manner that's funny, a lot more people will be open to hearing what you have to say.

Which is also why pranking is important as a way of expressing political thought.

I agree. My favorite billboard jams are the ones that don't make any sense at all. The ones that are changed to express explicit political opposition to something, like Shell Oil's presence in Nigeria, are great, but I really like the ones that are just bizarre, that don't necessarily mean anything. They just make your brain go "huh!?"

Why do you think that Surrealist and Absurdist presentations are more effective in certain instances than others? Is it just a taste preference, or is there a qualitative communicative difference?

I don't know. I know that I enjoy it because I like stuff where I get a sense that there's some creativity and a spirit of fun behind it. I've found that when I've been involved in political protests, the whole thing can be so heavy and dour that I feel like a sheep. I remember being in San Francisco as part of the protest against the invasion of Iraq that shut down the Bay Bridge. I was there and I even crossed the bridge, but I wasn't going to chant "No Blood For Oil!" It felt too sheep-like to be in a big crowd chanting slogans because I don't think



I don't think you get anyone's attention by hitting them over the head with a sledgehammer. Actually, you do get their attention, but the problem is that you've just smashed their brains in so, they're not going to be able to think anymore!

problems are reducible to simple slogans. It just felt wrong. "No Blood For Oil" was a very bad choice because it set it up as, "We don't want to shed *our* blood so that we can have our oil." Guess what happened? We didn't. We killed all the Iraqis but *we* didn't die! Hardly any American lives were lost.

People were still operating within the paradigm of a Vietnam-era mentality that automatically presupposed that if we went to war, it was our blood that was going to be spilled en masse and not someone else's. That's what the "No Blood For Oil" slogan suggested. It wasn't very empathetic because it didn't take into account how we'd spill other peoples blood, like the Iraqi civilian population who suffered the most casualties of anyone in the conflict.

Yeah. I'm sure that well-meaning people thought it meant the blood of any human being. But the way it played out in the media was that it was *our* blood—American blood—and not all the thousands of Iraqi civilians who died. But let's not forget how immediate and effective the mobilization against the war with Iraq was, despite its lack of media coverage. It was because all these aging folks from the '60s were still around. All the organizational tactics and infrastructure was still there.

Don't forget how much of that was left over from the '80s mobilization against the Central American conflict. The infrastructure from more recent anti-war organizations such as CISPES was still very much in place.

Yes. At the time I felt utterly powerless and devastated by the war. But because the American government knew that all of these protests were going on—that opposition to the war was immediate and well organized—the war was much shorter and less bloody than it would have been without those protests. They knew that the American people would not stomach a long, drawn out war, so they had to make it a short one. It's still fucked up, but that's "progress" of some sort. That's the only consolation I took away from the anti-Gulf War protests.

What's interesting is that the US has been allowed to maintain a defacto state of war with Iraq for the past eight years and very few people—at least on the level of mass movement politics—have acknowledged that. Of course we hear about occasional troop movements to the Middle East from Europe, but there's very little popular organizational cognizance that we're technically still in a state of conflict with Iraq. That scares me, because what we're doing right now is far worse than dropping smart bombs on baby formula factories.

It's a much more difficult thing to get people riled up by showing how we've destroyed Iraq's infrastructure, such as their ability to filter their water, grow crops, or produce medicine. It's a lot more subtle point to get across. ¶ But what I really want to know is what the hell does this all have to do with Monica Lewinsky and the RIAA?

[laughs] All right, where are you guys at with the RIAA right now? You want to explain exactly what it is that's happened?

The RIAA is an acronym for the Recording Industry Association of America. They represent 90 percent of recorded music in the US and are the lobbying and enforcement arm of the big five record labels—Polygram, EMI, BMG, Sony, and Time-Warner. The RIAA are the folks who brought us the long-playing records, parental advisory stickers and tried to add a hefty tax onto blank tapes. They're also the folks who have been going after counterfeiting and bootlegging operations for years and years. Starting last Christmas they began issuing guidelines about counterfeiting and bootlegging to CD pressing plants around the country. Since June they've stepped up the pressure on CD plants by reminding them that they are legally liable for huge sums of money if they press counterfeit or pirate CDs. Our new CD, *Over The Edge Volume 3: The Weatherman's Stupid Come Out Line*, was prevented from being made because our pressing plant, Discronics, pre-screened the record and heard bits of music from Pink Floyd and The Village People mixed into our CD. Our plant wanted to know if we had cleared these samples, and, of

course, we hadn't. ¶ There's a reason that this is happening now: The RIAA is telling pressing plants that *sampling* constitutes the same kind of copyright violation as *pirating* does. They are instructing them to inspect samples on records they are pressing and make sure that those samples have been cleared with their publishers. If artists like Negativland haven't cleared them, plants could be held legally liable for up to \$100,000 per infringement if they press CDs containing unauthorized samples—"per infringement" means *per disc pressed*. In such cases, pressing plants are encouraged to turn masters in question over to the RIAA so that they can check them out. Obviously, the plants are going to err on the side of extreme caution and turn down pressing jobs like ours. This is a totally new development—in the entire corporate mainstream and independent music industry, the "problem" of clearing a sample has always been an issue between the labels, the artists and the publishers, never the manufacturers. But with these new intimidating threats, the pressing plants are put into the position of being judge and jury for what is or is not acceptable art. Since Negativland feels that all our uses of samples are what is know as "fair use," we don't get our chance to have it out in a court of law because of this pre-emptive censorship. This new situation also means that we may no longer be able to manufacture *any* more Negativland CDs.

How do you respond to the charge that Negativland goes out of its way to get in trouble? Its not like you haven't dealt with this problem before, most notably during the U2 melodrama.

A lot of what we do is a lot more intuitive than people might think—that's why I think it works so well! We don't sit down and contrive to make works that are going to get us into trouble. We have an intuitive sense that we might be pushing at the edge of something—that we're doing something that we're not supposed to do. So we do it, because, creatively, that's an interesting place to be in. It's about that complicated. ¶ One of the reasons why Negativland is on its own record label, Seeland, is because we contin-



ue to do work that is still legally very problematic for any other record label to deal with. We think that what we do is perfectly legal, but many other people in the record industry would never want to release a Negativland record on their own label because we're a potential legal nightmare! That's why we run our own label. We'll take the risk. The other reason is that I just *hate* record labels. I hate them all. I hate the big ones and I hate the independent ones. I think the whole business is gross. The kind of people who are drawn to running record labels are generally the sort of folks who should *never* be running a record label! In the independent music world, I know of so few labels that I actually think are decent. Unethical behavior is not just found in the realm of the multinationals.

Indie labels can be just as corrupt, just as intolerant of artistic innovation, and just as criminally negligent in regards to artistic labor relations as majors are.

One of the reasons we were on the label that we used to be on, SST Records, was because we thought we could trust them. It turned out that we couldn't. In the wake of what happened with the U2 single in 1991, we returned to running our own label, Seeland, which we used to do in the early '80s. We were also lucky that we hooked up with Mordam Records for distribution.

It's interesting that you're hooked up with a punk distributor. Negativland is such an interesting anomaly in the punk scene because while your music is definitely not easily classifiable as traditionally punk, your ethos absolutely are.

The meaning of punk, in a certain surface kind of way, is now totally irrelevant. It's something you can use to sell Hondas. I kind of thought that a bunch of nerdy guys from the northern California suburbs getting sued for a record making fun of U2 is more in line with what I thought punk rock is all about. ¶ I was very aware of what was going on with punk in the late '70s up to the mid-'80s. What I always liked about it was the spirit and the ideas

behind it—I was never interested in the music. It never did anything for me. In fact, I always thought it was very musically conservative. "Wow, these ideas are great but the music is so normal," I used to say. "It sounds so Republican to me," even though there's the politics.

The politics in many ways have often transcended the music. I think that's what brings a lot of people into the punk community. But it's also what forces many people to leave when they find out that the ideology that once drew them in is inconsistent with the way that the scene actually works.

Negativland has done what it has done out of a sense of outrage. This goes back to what you were saying earlier—that there's always a sense of humor behind it. A lot of political punk stuff is just really angry. It articulates a certain kind of anger that I just never related to—it's too simple. I've always felt that the world is not that black and white. It's not just us against them. I don't think you get anyone's attention by hitting them over the head with a sledgehammer. Actually, you do get their attention, but the problem is that you've just smashed their brains in so, they're not going to be able to think anymore! No more brains! Personally, I don't see how effective change is going to happen by yelling in someone's face and pointing a finger at them about something that you think is wrong.

The nice thing about humor is that it helps explain the complexity of really big political problems without being overwhelming or insensitive to important subtleties. The problem with punk is that it reduces the world to these strict political dichotomies. There's never any in between and quite often, very little room for subtlety. That's why I think Negativland's critique of the system, of the media and of conventional middle class morality has been so significant and so important. You don't get the same insights in a Pennywise song.

When the first Negativland record came out, I was still living at home with my parents and going to high school. I was a suburban kid. I

used to go to San Francisco and went to some punk shows and shows of bands that were a little weirder than that like Tuxedomoon, The Residents, Pink Section, Inflatable Boy Clams and Indoor Life. There was a lot of animosity towards the suburbs and middle class life and I remember thinking "I hate it out here, but I'm from here." I loved it and hated it. It was what I knew. It was familiar. The funny thing is that even now, here in Olympia, when I occasionally have to go to the Capital Mall, because the only Radio Shack in town is there, I go inside and feel this odd sense of comfort and familiarity. When I was 12, I discovered science fiction and Super-8 cameras through going to the mall.

You've said on a number of occasions in the last year that collage has become one of the most pervasive techniques for making music. I want to know why you think that's the case.

Just listen to Janet Jackson and Puff Daddy.

That's not my point. Let me put it another way: Many bands and artists have sprung up in recent years, which deliberately employ collage as a way to criticize the cultural or political status quo: such as Negativland, John Oswald, The Evolution Control Committee, early EBN, Sucking Chest Wound, not to mention the Deconstructing Beck compilation which you just put out on Seeland. Collage is beginning to publicly coalesce into a commercially identifiable genre that critics in *Spin* and *CMJ* are starting to tag. Why do you think this is happening?

The collage aesthetic is everywhere in the media, just like it has been for years now—the way television commercials, radio programs, pop music and films are produced are totally dependent upon the cut-up aesthetic. Look at Oliver Stone's films *Nixon* and *Natural Born Killers*.

So you're saying the new collage aesthetic is derived from the way popular media is put together in general. Musicians are artistically reproducing an aesthetic which they've unconsciously assimilated through their exposure to mass culture.



I used to rip pages out of magazines and eat them. My mom told me years later, "You know Mark, it wasn't so much that you liked eating the paper. I think you mostly just liked the sound of the paper tearing."

Yeah, absolutely. For example, Janet Jackson's use of a Joni Mitchell sample shows how widespread the impulse really is. As we reach the end of the millennium, there's this weird recapitulation of everything that ever happened this century. I'm seeing it in fashion and it seems like it's happening in music. We're borrowing from everything and everywhere. We also have tools that allow us to grab stuff and manipulate it digitally, either sound or images—kids are now growing up with these tools. And I think there's something interesting about taking things and recombining them in order to come up with new stuff. You could say that all the stuff on a Negativland CD is stolen. But listen to our records. What do they sound like? Do they sound like other people's records? No. They sound like Negativland. They really do. We've created a very unique, distinct sound, even though it's based on stolen stuff. ¶ You know I recently—unfortunately—had the experience of seeing the film *Lost in Space*. Over the end credits was a very noisy cut-up sounding drum and bass style collage mix using dialogue clips from the film. It was made by Fatboy Slim, a guy who has actually sampled from Negativland in the past. And it really sounded pretty much like a Negativland track! So there I was watching the end credits of this huge stupid bloated Hollywood epic piece of shit and there's our aesthetic—completely absorbed and co-opted.

Part II

A lot has transpired between Negativland and the RIAA since we last spoke. How does the story end?

Well, it all began in 1962. My mother had been pregnant with me for at least nine months. Then I popped out with a loud squeak. There weren't samplers back then, but my father was recording the whole thing on a tape loop. ¶ Really though, my father has told me that when I was six months old I used to like to go up to the heat vents in the house and run my fingers along them so it would make noise—he used to call me "Ratchedy Ratchedy" because of that. I used to roll soup cans across the kitchen floor because of the sound. I was into sounds. I used to rip pages out of magazines and eat them. My mom told me years later, "You know Mark, it wasn't so much that you liked eating the paper. I think you mostly just liked the sound of the paper tearing.

This ain't *The Wonder Years*, Mark. What happened with the RIAA?

In response to all of the bad publicity they've been receiving and all the letters they've gotten from irate Negativland fans, the RIAA has issued revised guidelines to all CD pressing plants. Before this happened, I was interviewed by someone at the *Washington Post*. He spoke to the president of the RIAA, Hilary Rosen, and she thought this whole thing was a big publicity stunt. But at some point, once NPR and the *Washington Post* were calling her and the *New York Times* was writing about it and she was getting a ton of letters from fans of ours—and they weren't just letters saying "fuck you, you guys are assholes," they were actually long, thoughtful and articulate letters about why people were upset and disturbed about the direction the RIAA was taking—cumulatively, I think the RIAA realized that this was something that really needed to be addressed. ¶ Last week I came home and found a message on my answering machine from Hilary Rosen. I was totally shocked. "Oh my god, they're calling us on the phone," I thought. "What the hell is going on?" I called her back, expecting to have to go into a long description of why we do what we do, justifying our whole approach to reusing culture and why this is an inevitable, legitimate response to the world that we live in—the usual Negativland spiel. But immediately she said, "We're aware of your work. We don't want our guidelines to prevent people like you from getting your music made. We understand that what you do is not pirating. You're taking chunks of things and making collages. This should be allowed to exist."

Wow! What a sober position.

Yeah. She said, "We don't want our guidelines to prevent folks like you from getting their fair shake at CD pressing plants and getting their stuff made. So we're going to revise the guidelines." I even suggested to her how to re-write them! The RIAA proceeded to issue guidelines which for the first time ever acknowledged the concept of fair use and copyright to CD manufacturers. For the first time ever, they're acknowledging this gray area in copyright law. However, the revised guidelines do not go as far as we'd like to see them go. They still let the CD pressing plants determine what's going on. ¶ The

RIAA has never brought action against a pressing plant for a sample. And you *can* sign an indemnification agreement in which you agree that you are solely responsible for trouble that could happen legally in regards to your use of un-cleared samples. It remains to be seen, but I think for most pressing plants that ought to be okay. My feeling is that what the RIAA really should have done is unequivocally gotten themselves the hell out of the plants. Plants shouldn't be paying any attention to this at all. If anyone feels infringed upon, it should be up to the artists, the publishers and the record labels to take it to court. The pressing plants should never be deciding this stuff.

What's your final take on how this comedy of political errors has resolved itself?

The RIAA is not going far enough, but what could you expect? Look who they represent. Realistically speaking, we got way more than we expected. They did the one thing we thought they wouldn't do: They revised their guidelines. It should inspire people who use sampled materials to get their records pressed and if some problem comes up, they can point to these new guidelines and say, "Hey, look at this." I'd like to put a positive spin on what happened because I want to encourage people out there to keep doing it, keep pushing, get your plants to press this stuff by engaging them in dialogue. If they resist, argue with them, educate them, see what you can do. ¶ The biggest thing to come out of this whole adventure, regardless of how this plays itself out at the level of CD manufacturing, is that this is the very first time that anyone who is a voice of the mainstream corporate recording world has acknowledged the concept of Fair Use—that there is a grey area in copyright law. This is the first time that they have acknowledged that not all sampling is automatically illegal and an infringement. Previously, the mainstream recording industry has always said that it's a very cut and dried issue: If you sample, you have to get permission and you have to pay for it, end of story. Not any more. By conceding what we have been saying for the last eight years, the RIAA statement opens up the dialogue about this issue to a whole new level. ©

For the whole story on the Negativland/RIAA saga, go to Negativland's website at: www.negativland.com

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QUESTIONS with the zine:

Brat

1. How long have you been doing your zine and what issue are you on? We've been doing it for two years. Issue 8 should be out by the time you read this poll.

2. How long do you plan on doing it for? Indefinitely.

3. What would cause you to quit? Personal problems, schedule conflicts and burnout have caused people to quit the staff, but the rest of us are going stronger than ever.

4. How do you distribute your zine? We distribute thousands of copies in our beautiful hometown of Louisville, Kentucky. We mail copies to our subscribers and we hand-deliver copies to record & book stores in other cities. We also mail stacks of *BRAT* to volunteer distributors who do the legwork for us. We're trying to get a distribution deal worked out with a Big Time Distributor like AK or Desert Moon, but that is kind of tricky because right now *BRAT* is free (you only pay for postage).

5. Why is your zine called with it's called? We kicked around a lot of ideas, but eventually we settled on *BRAT* because it's simple and conveys something about the zine and who it's for. After we thought of the name, we jokingly said it was an acronym for various things: Bardstown Road Area Teenagers, Bardstown Road Adolescent Terrorists, Blasting Rightwingers All the Time, Boring Reading And Theory, and so on.

6. In order of importance, what would you rank as the three main subjects you cover? Youth rights, political and social struggles in general and independent youth culture.

7. What's the hardest part about doing your zine? Getting the ads to pay for the printing. The zine is wholly sponsored by advertisers; that's how we make it free for you, the reader. All advertisers are independent, youth-friendly businesses (local record stores, bookstores, record labels, and so on).

8. What's the most rewarding? Having total strangers say that *BRAT* affected their lives in a positive way.

9. Are you doing your zine for the free records? No, because we have to buy a lot of the records we want to support, and a lot of the free records we get aren't that great to begin with.

10. Was it weird to interview Robert Downey, Jr. when you were serving time together? It wasn't so much an interview as a post-coital conversation.

11. What was the best and worst interview you've ever done? Our interview with a local record store owner was screwed up for a number of reasons. Our interview with a local mayoral candidate was pretty good. Normally we don't print interviews, though. We mainly stick to articles, though we do use interviews as resources for articles.

12. Quote your favorite thing ever said on the screens of your zine. It's hard to pick a favorite quote, but here goes: "Don't you want to leave this world knowing you made a difference? Knowing that you threw your shoe into the works and changed someone else's life for the better? Everyday, unheard millions pass through without a sound, but I refuse to join them. I plan on making my mark—what about you? Anything is viable, anything that causes someone to think outside the norm, anything that causes someone to turn off their television for a second and actually think. Do things that disrupt our jaded lives. Rock the boat, derail the train, tear down the walls

and smash the locks of the prison gates that hold us back. Warp someone's mind, make them laugh, make them go crazy, confuse them until their mind explodes. Strive to find a more intense mode of existence. Be legendary. Most importantly, have fun." —from an article by Corey Lyons in issue #7

13. Do you write everything yourself? If so why? If not, how do you find writers? We have a staff of about a dozen people, mostly high-schoolers aged 14-18 and several people college age and beyond, who write all the content. Writers usually come to us and submit their articles. Anybody is welcome to submit, not just people under 21.

14. How is your zine produced? Slowly over a three or four month period. First we all submit articles, then they go through drafts and redrafts. We gather the ads and then put the whole thing together in a crazy, sleepless week.

15. Handwritten vs. Typewriter vs. Computer? Computer—but if we had no computer access we'd do it the old-fashioned way with typewriters, clip art and mimeography. For us, the point is to get the information out there, not be "old school" and defiantly Xerox-smeared or "new school" and fashionably unreadable.

16. What other zines inspire you? *Oblivion*, *Drop Out*, *Temp Slave!*, *Fat!So?*, *Retrogression*, *Destroy Amerikkka*, and of course *Punk Planet*.

17. What is "selling out?" Selling out is when you profess certain ideals but contradict them as soon as someone offers you enough money. There is a big gray area here, though. Are anti-capitalist punks "sellouts" if they set up tables at shows to sell stuff? No, of course not. Not all trade or commerce is capitalist. "Selling out" is when you let an unethical corporation use your music to market their shoes. It's when you make hundreds of thousands of dollars a year and don't use that money to help your community and your world. We don't think "selling out" is making a living doing what you love, even if what you love is radical activism.

18. If you could live off of your zine, would you? Yes, definitely, though after a lot of discussion we aren't too optimistic about the feasibility of living off of *BRAT*. We're content to have it sustain itself. But who wouldn't want to be able to do what they love for the rest of their lives without worrying about working at a "real" job?

19. If you had a chance to interview someone who you most likely would never have a chance to talk to, who would it be? Our experience has shown that you can get in touch with and talk to just about anyone if you go about it in the right way. Logistics prevent us from interviewing everybody we want to, though. We wish we could interview every kid who fights their school, their employer, their parents and/or their government and wins.

20. Describe your dream interview (who, where, what setting?) Right now our dream interview would probably be with "Uncle" Noam Chomsky. We'd have him come to Louisville and speak to several different groups of progressives and students, then we'd sit down with him here at *BRAT* headquarters and pepper him with questions all night. He would be magically patient with us, his schedule would be miraculously free enough to permit all of this, and we'd somehow have the money to bring him here. Runners up include Jello Biafra, KRS One, Michael Moore and lots of dead people like Emma Goldman.

BRAT is available for \$2 from PO Box 4964, Louisville KY 40204-0964. Subscriptions are \$7 for 4 issues and \$13 for 8. Visit them online at <http://www.verbivore.org/brat> and submit your own work.

20

QUESTIONS

with the band:

Small Brown Bike

1. When did your band form?

Fall, 1995.

2. When will it break up?

We have no intentions of breaking up until we have kids who can play our songs better than us.

3. What have you released so far?

No Place Like You 7", *(And Don't Forget Me) 7"*, and a split tour cassette with Keleton DMD. All are available on Salinger Press.

4. Why do you play the music that you play?

Why do you listen to the music you listen to?

5. What's the weirdest thing you've ever had happen at a show?

We played at a warehouse in Cincinnati where they kept the front door locked because of the neighborhood it was in. We rode a freight elevator to get to the fourth floor where the space was located. There were still people at the show and it was a fun time, but we're not sure how they got there or where they came from.

6. What's the best show you've ever played?

When we were on tour with Keleton DMD, we played in a living room in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. We executed a tag team style set where DMD played two songs and then tagged out to us and we played two songs. Even though the people had never heard of us they all seemed to have a good time.

7. State your purpose.

We consider this band to be a release.

8. Do you mind that your band is always being billed as "ex-members of the Swedish black metal band whose lead singer killed that other black metal band's lead singer"?

It was all a big misunderstanding. Our ships met in the Atlantic and a Nordic war ensued...

9. How do you describe yourself to relatives who have no idea about what you play?

"Well Grandma, Dan plays the five piece drumkit, Mike plays the six string electric guitar as does Trav, and Ben plays the four string electric bass guitar." We just leave it at that.

10. How do you describe yourself to kids in the scene who haven't heard you?

We're a four piece band with a Bachelor's degree in pop sensibility and a minor in metal breakdowns. We're currently seeking a Master's in our own sound.

11. What bands do you see as your contemporaries?

All the bands that we play shows with, and that we can hang out with after the show.

12. What is the antithesis of your band?

Big Yellow Bus.

13. Outside of music and bands, what influences you?

Relationships with friends and family.

14. What is "selling out"?

When Mike P. has to order more records.

15. If you could make a living off of your band, would you?

If you could make a living off our band, would you?

16. Where do you practice?

Currently in Marshall, Michigan—the city of hospitality.

17. If you could play on a four band bill, with any bands that have ever existed, who would you play with, and what order would they play?

Thin Lizzy, Elvis Costello and the Attractions, Faith No More, Jeremy Enigk.

18. What goals do you have as a band?

Make songs, make shows, and make records.

19. What makes for a good show?

Shiny happy people.

20. If you were to cover a song (that you don't already) what would it be?

"Jailbreak" by Thin Lizzy. "Keep it on the Down Low" by R. Kelly is a close second.

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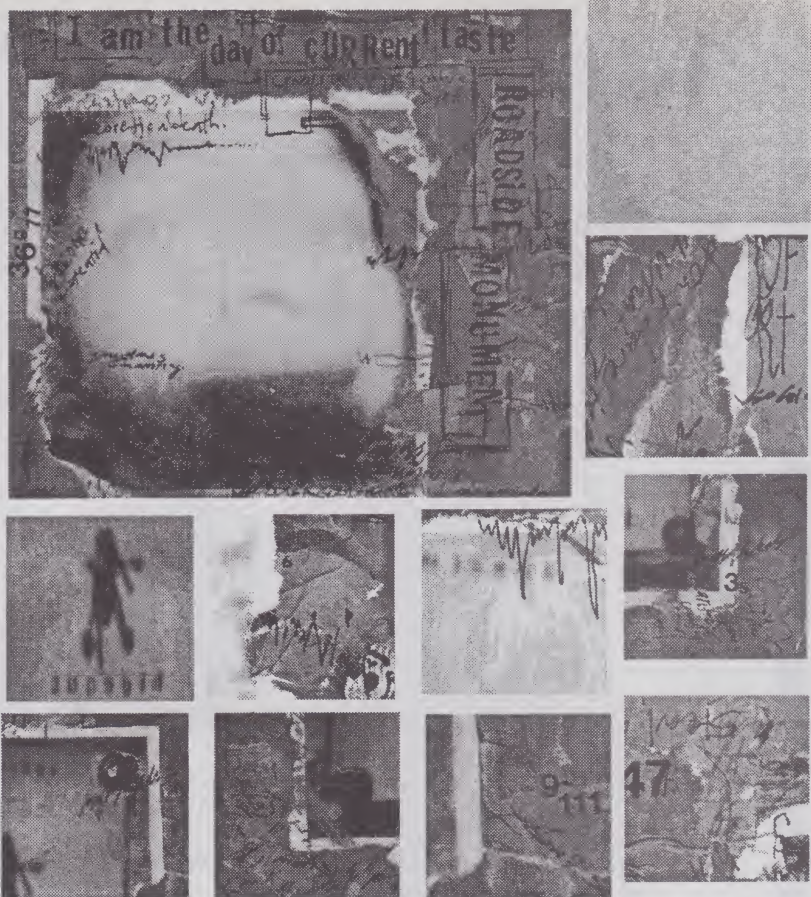
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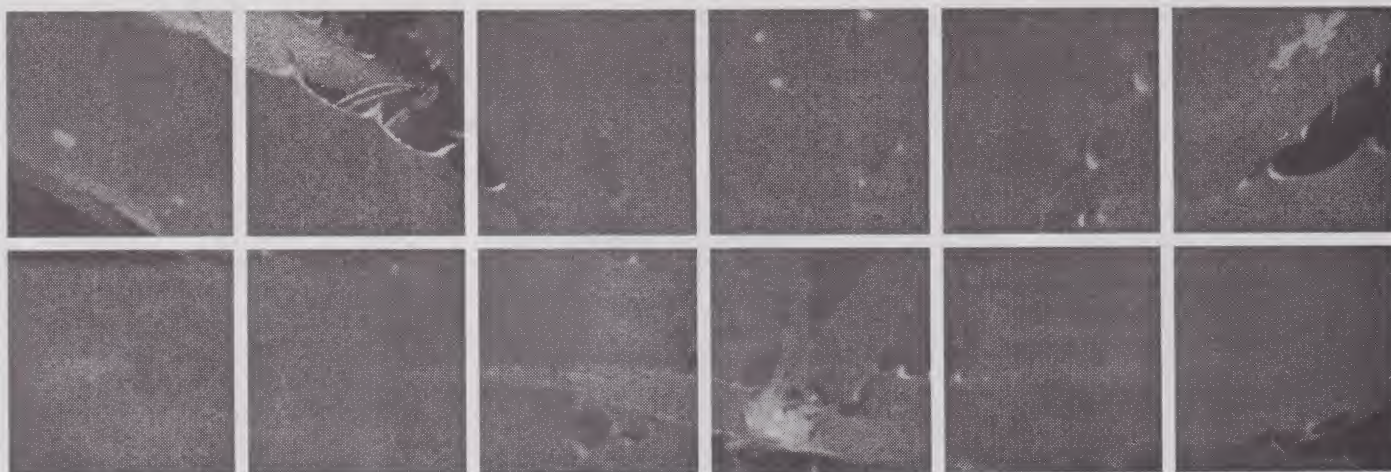
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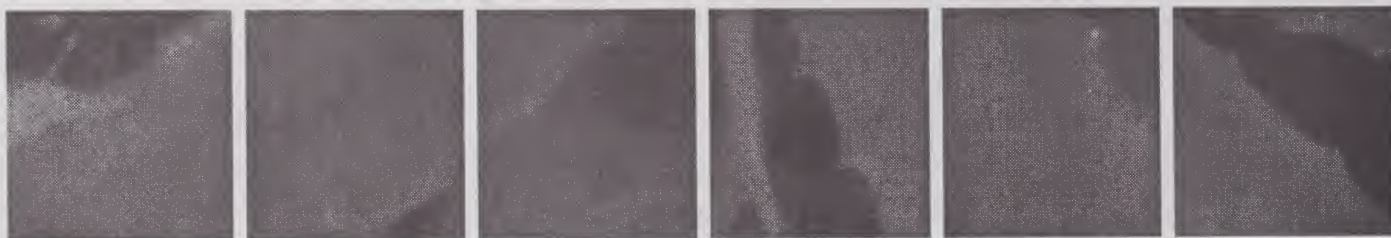


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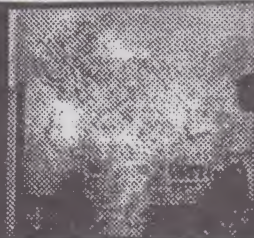
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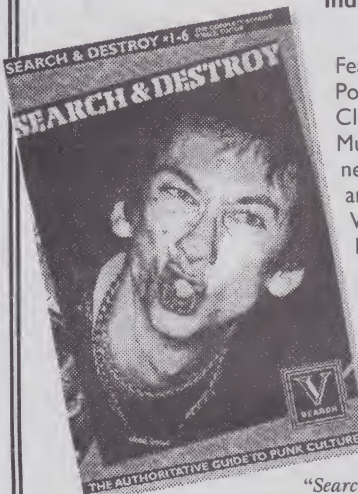
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By Alex McCown

SHOCKTREATMENT: MAJOR LABELS & HEALTHCARE

Craig Wedren can tell you about **HEALTHCARE**. In 1995, about a year after he had begun working full-time for a large corporation, Craig was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease, a form of cancer that affects the lymph nodes. This heart-wrenching fact left him wondering what was going to happen to his life. Unfortunately, there was an even bigger crisis: The corporation Craig worked for, like every other company in the same industry, refused to provide health care coverage for much of its workforce.

Facing staggering medical bills, Craig luckily discovered—without any help from his company—that he was covered by a union plan that just happened to cover only people with his specific job title. Had his position been different, this policy would not have covered him. This blessing took care of his initial treatment. Everything was going well and Craig had gone into his first remission.

Unfortunately, it was then that the corporation changed its policy on him. Craig was removed from the plan. He is currently on temporary coverage. With his cancer now officially a preexisting condition, the future does not look bright.

This story could be told by millions of others in America, as companies replace true benefits and full-time jobs with “temps,” partial-policy benefits, and other cost-cutting measures regardless of basic human needs. What makes Craig's story different? Craig is the lead singer of Shudder to Think, a band currently signed to Epic records, a division of Sony. In signing to a major label, Craig thought, as most would, that he had secured some stability. He was wrong.

Health care is currently an issue that, while recognized as one of the most important to people's lives, is in denial by many musicians working today. It is difficult to face up to the necessity—and the price tag—of modern health care when many are simply trying to make the rent each month. Scarier still, the future many musicians hope for, a contract with a label to make records and tour, does not offer much promise: A grand total of zero labels in America today currently provide health care for their artists. When looking for solutions to such a sticky issue, the options don't offer much promise. Whether on a major label, an indie, or unsigned, a musician doesn't exactly have a lot to hope for.

INDIE OR UNSIGNED? DON'T GET SICK AND PLEASE DRIVE CAREFULLY

Steve Koester is the guitarist and vocalist for Punchdrunk, a New York-based band. Having been in the band for seven years, Steve finally got health care six months ago—when he took a full-time job. “I just had a physical for the first time since I was twenty,” Koester explains. “The doctor was this old Jewish guy. I walk into the room, and he said, ‘What are you doing here? You're young, you're fine, go home.’ So that was pretty cool.”

Steve is one of two members in the four person band to have health care, and he feels quite lucky to have not found himself in a tight spot without it. “The fact that we never got in a major accident, someone seriously injured, is total luck. I mean, we were driving around for five years in this completely unsafe van, going too far in bad weather to make some gig. And a major accident without health care is the kind of thing that would totally sink you.”

Milwaukee's The Promise Ring weren't as lucky. While touring in early 1998, on their way to Minnesota late at night the band's van hit a patch of ice and spun out of control. It ended up upside down in a ditch at the side of the road. They were all taken to the hospital, where guitarist Jason Gnewkow was immediately treated for serious injuries. While all the other band members were treated and released, Jason was transferred to a nearby hospital in critical, but stable condition and was not released until almost a week later.

Though grateful to be alive, the band's “recovery” carried with it an ugly price tag: For singer Davey VonBolen and bassist Tim Burton, the price tag was around \$4,000 each. For Jason, it was far worse: approximately \$20,000 in medical bills.

“I never had healthcare, I didn't think about it,” Jason explains. I had trouble paying my rent, let alone healthcare. What's really ironic about it, though, is the level our band is at. We're at a point

Health care is currently an issue that, while recognized as one of the most important to people's lives, is in denial by many musicians working today.

where we can't work jobs because of the time commitments of the band, but we're not to a level where we're making any money whatsoever."

Steve from Punchdrunk echoes Jason's sentiment. "It's totally a catch-22. The more you work, the less time you have for your music. Benefits are nice, but in a commercially unsuccessful indie-rock band, they aren't even a consideration. Nobody's giving you money for anything. How can you get pissed off that you don't have health care when you don't have *anything*?"

Not having anything is standard for bands like Punchdrunk and the Promise Ring, both on independent labels. As Rob Sieracki, from Touch & Go Records explains, "the financial capability just isn't there. You're talking about labels that have just enough to put out records, and maybe pay the people who work full-time for the label. Where are they going to get health coverage plans from?"

Kim Coletta, from DeSoto Records agrees. "[When running and indie] it's not, 'What about health care?', it's 'How little money can I lose when I put this album out?'"

For Jason Gnewkow, the only answer to his medical debt seemed to be to declare bankruptcy. However, Jason's story thankfully ends on a happier note, thanks to one of the few organizations dedicated to helping musicians with healthcare problems, Sweet Relief.

Sweet Relief, founded almost a decade ago, is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping musicians who are in dire medical straits. The first recipient of its proceeds, Victoria Williams, was facing staggering costs from her fight with MS. Sweet Relief organized their first benefit album, with bands like Soul Asylum and Pearl Jam, to help raise money. Since that time, they've released a second benefit compilation and grown even more.

The Promise Ring's manager got in touch with Sweet Relief and explained their situation. Jason, Davey, and Tim each filled out the reams of necessary paperwork to apply for aid. Before any money even changed hands, Sweet Relief made a quick call to the hospital Jason had been taken to, and without another word, his bill was cut in half, to only \$10,000. The organization then awarded Jason \$5,000, their largest sum and covered most of Davey's bill as well. Unfortunately, like any charity, Sweet Relief's funds are extremely limited, making them an option only in worst-case scenarios. The options for indie and unsigned musicians are few. Either get a job that gives you healthcare or a job to pay for healthcare—either of which seriously hampers practicing and touring as a real band—or start hoping for some *really* good luck.

It's hard to place the blame at the feet of independent labels—labels that more often than not struggling simply to survive. Healthcare in this country is simply too expensive for tiny labels to afford. With major labels, it's a whole nother story.

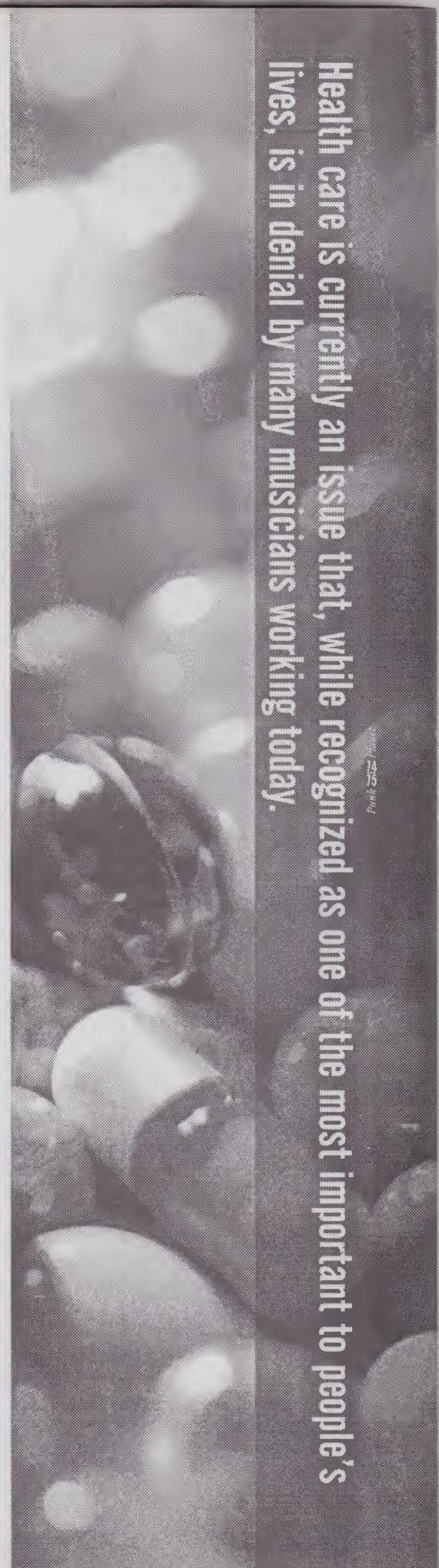
MAJOR LABELS: BEND OVER AND COUGH

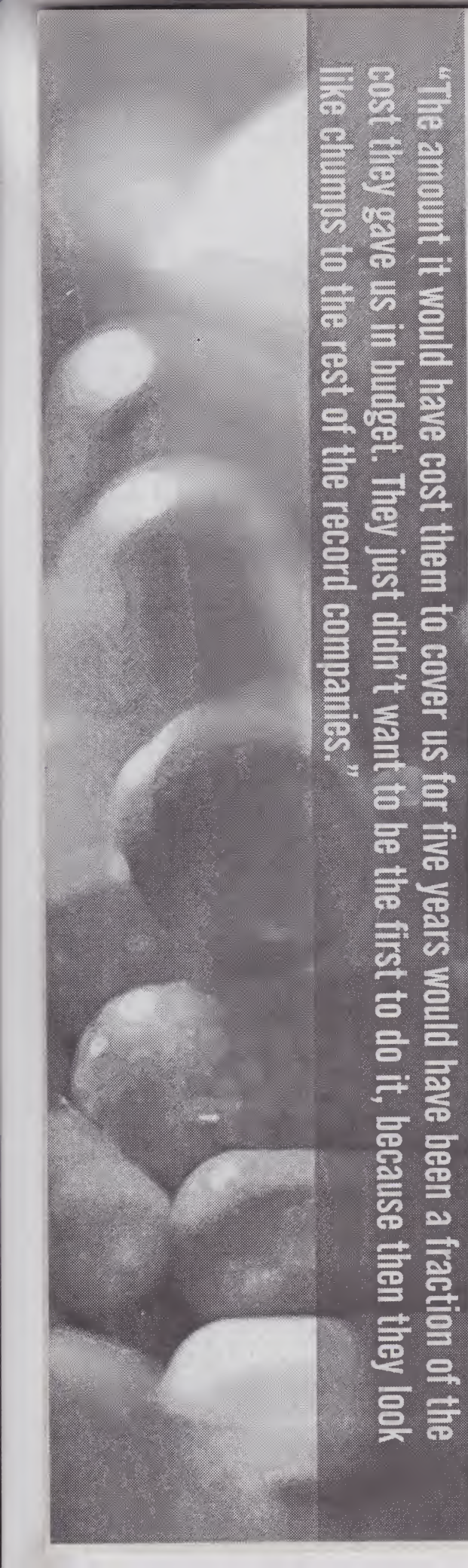
Johnny Temple plays bass in the band Girls Vs. Boys (GVSB), who signed a contract last year with Geffen records. Before signing, the band approached the negotiating table with a certain amount of trepidation. Luckily, a bidding war broke out between labels over the band, enabling the band to draw up a list of demands to shop around.

Geffen responded best, essentially agreeing to every point except one: the band demanded healthcare for the duration of their stay on Geffen. The label flatly refused. GVSB were left with two options: either accept the deal or begin negotiations all over with a different company. Since the attitude of some band members was that they were signing "a record deal, not a health care deal," Temple ultimately gave in and signed without health coverage.

As Temple explains, much of the reason the band sought healthcare was ideological, not out of necessity. "We wanted to try and help the artist community in general. We made more than enough off of our advance to be able to afford healthcare for the next several years, at least. It was more about setting a precedent, to break into the barrier the majors had about it."

When they finally caved on the issue, they joined every other band currently on a major label, in supplying their own health insurance.





"The amount it would have cost them to cover us for five years would have been a fraction of the cost they gave us in budget. They just didn't want to be the first to do it, because then they look like chumps to the rest of the record companies."

Major labels, like most corporations, love to cite cost as a major reason why they will not supply benefits like health coverage. However, in the case of major labels, the argument is especially weak. A simple breakdown of cost demonstrates the flaw in the statement. MCA's music division, which controls a host of majors, including Geffen, stated EBITD earnings of \$123 million in 1995. Providing healthcare for a typical four-person band like GVSF for an entire year would cost, at the extreme, \$10,000. To sponsor one hundred bands at the same cost would cost a million dollars a year. This is obviously simplified, but the fact remains the same: profits at MCA would go from \$123 to \$122 million. For a label so liquid with profit, healthcare coverage is hardly an economic issue.

Labels, flush with money, will throw hundreds of thousands of dollars towards promoting the very bands that they refuse to shell out a fraction of such wealth to for their health. Having seen this behavior from a first-hand perspective, Temple feels it borders on the absurd. "I was just amazed that with the amount of money they were talking about, willing to give [towards health care] was just miniscule compared to the rest of the money they were putting into us," Temple explains. "The amount it would have cost them to cover us for five years would have been a fraction of the cost they gave us in budget. They just didn't want to be the first to do it, because then they look like chumps to the rest of the record companies."

The point that became clear with in everyone I spoke to was that to a certain degree, majors were in league together setting across-the-board standards for each other, deciding on how they all would function. A quick look at the way each label functions shows that diversity in respect to how labels treat their artists is literally impossible to find. Such actions do violate current anti-trust laws, which make it illegal for companies in any one market to collaborate together on standard non-government regulations in order to increase profit. However, as Temple explains, this behavior is now commonplace.

"The labels are completely in cahoots with each other," says Temple. "Most of them are owned by one or two parent companies. These people are not supposed to be shaping policy together, but the Justice Department is simply not cracking down on these people." The fact that the entertainment industry is among the largest contributors to the Democratic party certainly doesn't help matters much.

This process of doing business by following industry standards—while patently illegal—does offer a glimmer of hope, however slim. For bands to be provided with healthcare, "a major label would have to bite the bullet, and say, we've got to do it, it's important." Shudder to Think's Wedren explains. "I don't foresee it happening. But you know what? If one did it, the rest of them would follow like lemmings."

Federal law requires a company to extend health benefits to all full-time employees if they extend them to one. Almost all corporations the size of major labels have health plans. In fact, all majors have them as well. A&R reps, art directs, the CEO, even mail room clerks get health benefits as employees of major labels. So how is it that the bands—the very people making the money that is paying for these benefits—don't get in on the action? Simple. They aren't employees—they're "independent contractors."

Kim Coletta, who in addition to working on DeSoto Records was the bassist for Jawbox, who signed to a major label, put out two records, and then were dropped by the label. Having been through the entire process, she is somewhat ambivalent on the issue of requiring benefits such as health care from major labels. She would like to see it happen, but she fears the compromises that would go along with the change from independent contractor to employee.

"Bands on majors are still independent from them, and they're proud to be," Coletta explains. "It would be horrible for these bands to be actual employees of a label. Health care coverage would make a band have to answer even more to a label. God forbid any band should have to be more accountable to a major than they already are."

Jawbox didn't even attempt to get health care in their deal, because, as Coletta explains, "We knew we wouldn't get it and other issues were important to us—like getting complete creative control."

Wedren sees the artists position in quite a different light: "The way labels view artists is that we're freelance, which is ironic, because really we're indentured. If I sound bitter, it's not towards any one person, it's towards the business, towards the way we're treated."

THE UNIONS: WHO ARE YOU? AND WHAT DO YOU PLAY?

In the face of such exploitation, one would hope that a union would come along and save the day. And in Wedren's case you'd be right—at least temporarily.

"When I joined Epic, I was forced to join AFTRA [the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists], because I was the singer," Wedren explains. "If I earn at least \$7,500 a year, then they cover me. Since we had a sizable advance and it was counted as royalties, no problem." The treatment went great—"It was like a miracle, because I thought I was screwed," says Wedren—and the coverage was more than adequate. But the ending isn't happy. Immediately after Wedren was declared in remission following his last radiation treatment, the label changed the rules. The band's advance no longer counted as royalties—in fact, it was counted *against* them.

So now, Wedren is stuck. He is currently on COBRA insurance, which will cover people for 18 months after their health insurance runs out, the same monthly fee as a normal plan, with the agreement that if he begins making \$7500 a year again, he can return to the AFTRA health coverage. Unfortunately, with the debt the band has accrued to the label, the odds of that happening are slim.

"The 18 months is rapidly running out," Wedren worries. "It'll be out in March. There's still an enormous amount of doctor stuff going on, bloodwork, CAT scans, etc. I don't know what I'm going to do, because it's a preexisting condition now. So it'll be really hard for me to get insurance. I have faith that I'll figure something out, but I'm scared at what's going to happen in a few months."

The situation is bleak for Wedren. For most musicians, the situation is even bleaker—AFTRA only covers vocalists. This leaves the vast majority of musicians to seek the only other music union there is, the AFM [American Federation of Musicians].

"[The AFM] right now is non-existent," GVSF's Temple complains. "It's just not very present in the life of musicians, and I don't know why that is. It's really hard to get answers out of them."

Wedren echos Temple's complaints: "Once in a while, you'd get a thing in the mail, telling you about dues, and you'd be like, 'What? What the hell is this?'"

When confronted with these complaints, Tom Baskerville, business agent for the Twin Cities branch of the AFM, immediately points to what the union HAS accomplished. "We focus on contract protections, pensions plans, things like that. I wish we could provide a health plan, but the money has to come from one end or the other, and nobody wants to raise the dues to such a large degree."

The AFM does offer a short-term major injury plan and a disability fund members can apply for, but no health coverage. Any plans offered through the AFM cost extra, similar to a normal coverage cost.

Search for information about health care on the AFM's web page and you will get a list of ways to keep yourself healthy. Nowhere on the web page is there any mention of the union trying to secure label-provided health care.

Nonetheless, the American Federation of Musicians is there, the strongest and largest of any union—and just about the only—that works to secure musicians' rights. Yet the AFM doesn't even seem prepared to deal with the current state of music, let alone trying to make inroads on the health issue. "We don't really have much of a rock musician contingent these days." The AFM's Baskerville explains, "The bulk of our membership is from classical, jazz, and the like."

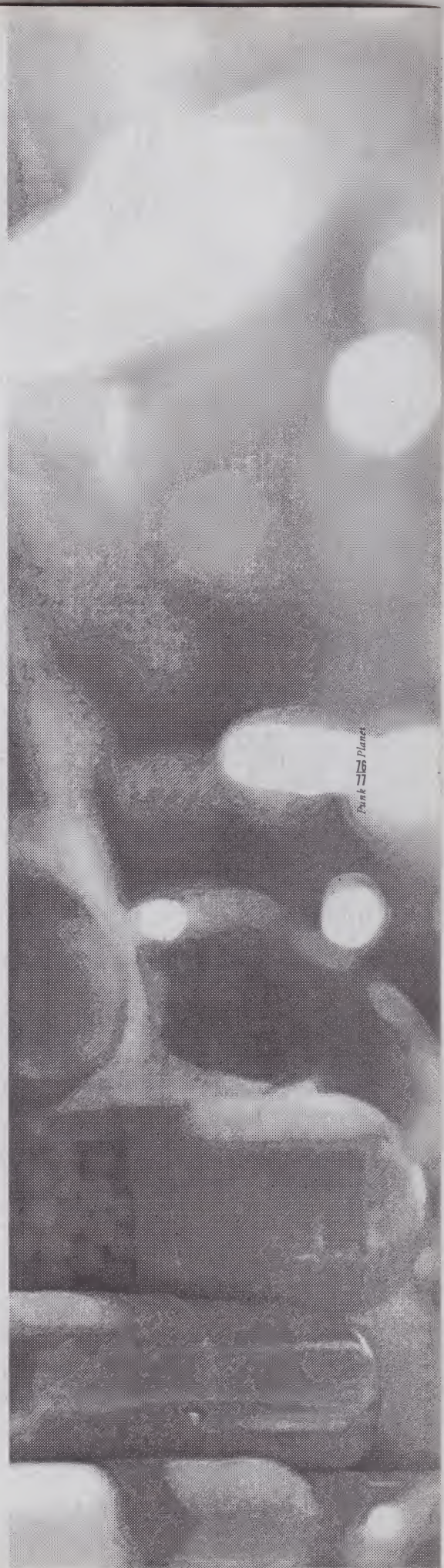
The AFM's lack of activism on healthcare is indicative of a larger problem of silence.


THE MEDIA: DON'T BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOU

With the high-profile nature of the music industry, one would think such a major problem would be addressed in the press. Yet many of the major music magazines—even those investigating the problems in the music industry—are noticeably silent.

The silence isn't that surprising. After all, many of the magazines themselves are tied up in the profits from the industry—either through direct ownership by the same media corporations that own the majors or through ad sales and contracts. Having such financial stake in the industry, it seems that the media doesn't want to report on issues that could conceivably cause embarrassment—and shrink the industry's deep pockets.

"The media for the most part is owned by five or six companies," GVSF's Temple explains, "and these same companies are part-owners of defense contractors. That whole world doesn't care ..





about employees getting fair treatment, they care about the bottom line. I mean, how many times do stories get squashed because advertisers don't agree with the editorial?"

The mainstream music media, by and large, fits extremely well into what cultural critic Noam Chomsky has called the "Media Propaganda Model." It is a natural expectation that the major media and other ideological institutions will generally reflect the perspectives and interests of established power. The "propaganda model" tells us that the media frames most reporting in a manner supportive of established privilege, and that far from being excessive in its anti-establishment "watchdog of democracy" role, it is quite the opposite.

In other words, the media presents an image of "the truth above all else," but the truth itself is quite subjective to elite opinion. In the case of the music media, magazines like *Rolling Stone* and *Spin*,—despite public attempts to "take on" important issues within the industry—by and large ignore much of the standard business practices of the industry, including healthcare. By ignoring such routine unfair treatment, the media is complying with the interests of both its corporate owners and the music industry on the whole.

LABEL EMPLOYEES: WHAT ME WORRY?

Of course, mainstream music magazines are not the only people evading the issue. Complicit in the behavior of the industry towards its artists is every employee who doesn't address the problems therein, for fear of causing problems for themselves—or their paycheck.

Writing this article has been particularly difficult, not only because of the lack of press on it, but also from the hesitancy of anyone to talk about it. I spoke numerous times to people at major labels and was given the runaround every time I attempted to go anywhere with the conversation. As GVSb's Temple explains, "They want to keep their jobs. A&R people, they're definitely pawns, but at the same time, if you step into a situation you need to be accountable for it. That's what pisses me off about these people. They've compromised themselves so completely. Bands too, won't speak out about stuff. It's that corporate grip. [A&R people] are making, like, a hundred grand a year. They're not just concerned about putting food on the table. They're fucking greedy."

Kim Coletta, having seen most of these processes firsthand, is careful not to set up an "us against them" mentality. "There are people at majors kicking ass." Coletta explains, "It's not like us equals good, them equals bad, you know? I've met some real scumbags in the independent world. Good people are where you find them, right?"

The influx of new employees at major labels—younger employees who grew up with punk rock and worked at independent labels—is often held up as an example of how majors are "getting better" and hiring "good people."

The implicit assumption here, of course, is that this makes for fairer deals—for bands getting treated like they deserve. More often than not, however, this seems to be truer on paper than it is in practice. A secretary who had worked at a major for 20 years told me that in all the time she's worked there, she has "never seen any sort of change in how people deal with each other. It's just business as usual, always has been." One A&R rep crowed to me about getting "fresh blood" into the "game", because it supposedly made things more fun, more "dangerous. Everyone's out for blood," he explained, gleefully. As GVSb's Temple explains, if this is a kinder, gentler business, no one seems to have noticed.

"This 'young people who know punk' image, I'd believe it if I saw anything. The fact that we have complete creative control [in our deal] is not because of any industry people, it's because of smart bands like Sonic Youth that used their leverage to gain these benefits and changes for everyone else. I think there's lots of potential for these young people from the independent world, but I think it's too easy to get sucked up into your fancy lifestyle, and check your values at the door."

On a whole, the attitude of everyone I dealt with, as well as all the musicians perspectives, seemed to really reinforce the fact that this issue is not one that will be easily confronted by people in the industry. In my repeated efforts to find contacts in the major label world, I was unable to reach many people willing to speak out against the injustices currently happening. A frequently made comment by more than a few people was "Yeah, there's problems, just like in any business, but I don't

really want to talk about that right now." As both Temple, Wedren, and Coletta felt, you need to be able to go through the process and still keep your dignity.

For Temple, keeping his dignity doesn't include keeping his mouth shut. "Just because we (GVSB) signed to a major label doesn't mean I'm gonna shut up about what I think. I have a duty to myself and the world around me to tell it like I see it. Maybe I speak from the comfort of a white middle class background, but I mean... I'd like to be rich, but I'm not going to abandon my ethics in the process."

THE NATIONAL NEED: DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

For the short time before it was eighty-sixed the Republican Congress, healthcare was the most pressing national debate in America. President Clinton, in his attempt to gain support for his proposal, gave speech after speech about his desire to provide "affordable health care to every man, woman, and child in America." Of course, Clinton being Clinton, he rolled over and played dead immediately after Congress voiced disapproval.

Despite Clinton's reversal on the issue, the necessity of overhauling the entire health care system is still crucial. According to recent Census Bureau reports, 43 million Americans lack health insurance. One in ten children in America have no health coverage. Yet recent attempts to adjust minor aspects of the system—the creation of COBRA, the invention of "medical savings accounts"—have had little or no noticeable effect to the majority of those without insurance.

"The society we live in is not about helping out the people who need it most," explains Rick Valentin of the Poster Children, who were signed to Sire Records for eight years. "There's always been someone I feel like I could fall back on in an emergency, family or somebody, but a lot of people out there don't have that comfort. And nobody in power is really making an effort to help these people, because they aren't contributing money to their campaigns, they don't have a voice. Major labels are big business, plain and simple."

The music industry's treatment of its artists as "independent contractors" seems very much in line with the behavior of most major corporations in the '90s. The temp-hiring, wage-cutting, benefit-slashing attitude so pervasive in the latest quests for larger profits has radically affected the ability of much of America to live above the poverty level, much less manage to get decent health care. The inability to get health care from major labels is akin to most other corporations' "temp" policies, where temps, freelancers and independent contractors are hired to replace full time employees—often at less pay and almost certainly without benefits.

SHOCK TREATMENT: THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

There is some hope, in the form of the deal recently negotiated by Built to Spill. The band successfully got full health and dental insurance into their contract. However, it's not company-provided: The company agreed to reimburse Built to Spill for the non-company health insurance of their choice. While vastly different from having health care provided by the label itself, it is nevertheless the first of hopefully many inroads into the issue.

Despite the success of Built to Spill, it is currently an isolated incident. "I'm not optimistic," Shudder to Think's Wedren confesses. "The only band I've ever known who really fought for it is GVSB. And they went to the mat for it, and they lost. So, I don't know. But it has to be done. Someone has to set the precedent of humanitarianism, as opposed to cannibalism."

This applies throughout corporate America, and should be confronted at all levels. GVSB's Johnny Temple also feels that the future, though currently worrisome, has the potential for change.

"The way the major labels treat their employees as independent contractors is identical to the rest of corporate America's temp-hiring nature," Temple explains. "It's simple: They don't care about the little guy succeeding. It has to change." ©



Someone has to set the precedent of humanitarianism, as opposed to cannibalism.

Everyone knows it. Every once in a while, if I'm lucky, someone will even say something definitive about it: *yes, it's true*. But then it just sits there, untouched.

I'm a girl who likes to lay it all on the table, so here it is: *"whitestraightboy" hegemony organizes punk*. And I'm not just talking about its dominant demographic.

Wait. I'll back up.

Race, in punk, is like outer space: this distant constellation of "issues" clustered way, way out there. This isn't to say, for instance, that punks haven't produced some shrewd analyses of US foreign policy (a perennial punk favorite), effectively organized huge protests against Apartheid or the Gulf War. In fact, punks seem to be pretty good with political economy; I first learned about the World Bank/IMF from the zine *Assault (With Intent to Free)*, ferchris-sakes.

But somehow the p-rock backyard got disconnected from the world on the other side of the fence and what happens "out there" is rarely reflected "in here." So when Kathleen Hanna screamed, "SUCK MY LEFT ONE!" and nailed Punk Rock to the wall, and when the core soon after went queer, I jumped for joy because it was about time.

But I'm still waiting for my race riot.

Take the way in which travel gets talked about in punk. It reveals all kinds of assumptions we make about privilege and social mobility. Travel is almost always about leisure, self-discovery and "freedom," and rarely ever about immigration, refugee movement or exile. It's never about how some people—white, heterosexual, middle-class, male—often travel in more comfort than others—non-white, queer, poor, female. Don't mistake me, I'm not suggesting we chuck that new *Cometbus* out the window. My point is this: we need to examine our categories, *the words we use and how we use those words*, for the exclusions we make when we oh-so casually invoke them.

This essay tells several stories. The first admits to a motive. That is, it begins with my cynicism, my disappointment and my

anger. The second story is half-formed: It's the story of writing a critical analysis of a set of communities—grouped under the umbrella of "punk"—with which I have a sordid past, an ambivalent present and a mutual love-hate relationship. The third and most obvious story is about those communities and what gets circulated under the sign of "race" there. Unfortunately, this is also the most complex story.

So let's map out some of the ways the punk scene deals with race and break down some of the assumptions and problems involved with these particular approaches. I'll

it's (not) a white world

TO GET OUR OFFICIAL MEMBERSHIP CARD, WE'RE SUPPOSED TO PUT CERTAIN PARTS OF OURSELVES ASIDE—OR AT LEAST ASSIGN THEM TO A SECONDARY RUNG. DIFFERENCES ARE SEEN AS POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE. SOME—LIKE RACE OR GENDER—ARE SEEN AS MORE DIVISIVE THAN OTHERS. THE ASSUMPTION IS THAT SOMEHOW "WE,"—BECAUSE PUNK IS SO PROGRESSIVE, BLAH BLAH—HAVE "GOTTEN OVER" THESE THINGS.

looking for race in punk by Mimi Nguyen

just give a general overview—there's a lot more ground to cover. So rather than present a laundry list of specific examples of racist statements or misdeeds, overt or otherwise, produced under the name Punk Rock, it might be more useful to try to understand the "why" and "how"—the politics and attitudes that *make room* for those acts and misdeeds.

And remember: I critique because *I care*.

I got your theory right here, whiteboy.

I'm going to say something blasphemous: There's something really "American" structuring the rhetoric of punk rock citizenship. When social critic Joan Copjec wrote, "If all our citizens can be said to be Americans, this is not

because we share any... characteristics, but rather because we have all been given the right to *shed* these characteristics," she could've just as easily been talking about punk. Somehow punk is a quality that's understood as transcending race, gender, sexuality, or whatever.

To get our official membership card, we're supposed to put certain parts of ourselves aside—or at least assign them to a secondary rung. Differences are seen as potentially divisive. Some—like race or gender—are seen as more divisive than others. The assumption is that somehow "we,"—because punk is *so* progressive, blah blah—have "gotten over" these things. But

when something earth-shattering like riot girl ruptures the smooth surface of p-rock, punks scramble to "unify" again. Appeals are made to a "common culture"—whether as "Americans" or punks (dude)—in order to flatten, soothe, or (if those don't work) bang out those erupting differences.

Of course this "common culture" is not really that common at all. Whiteness falls into a "neutral" category and race is a property that somehow belongs only to "others." (How many times have you heard, "Yeah, this girl said..." with the assumption that she's white taken for granted?) So this abstract, conformist citizenship offered by punk to someone like me is a one-handed affair—it all depends on how I want to narrate my raced, sexed, and gendered body into these sup-

posedly democratic communities. If I keep my mouth shut and don't "make an issue" of it, I'm told that I'll get along fine—never mind the psychic erasures I might have to endure.

That's the paradox: Some kinds of "individuality" are valued according to punk's "common culture," while others, well, aren't. This is what I mean when I say "whitestraightboy" hegemony organizes punk, and this is why I make a point of my "Asianqueergirltomboy" specificity.

While race *everywhere but punk* is understood as institutional and structural, within the scene it gets talked about in terms of isolated, individual attitudes. So racism in the scene is then commonly understood as something that irrational extremists (you know, good ol' boys in

white sheets or marching around with shaved heads) and maybe the Big Bad State do, while "ordinary" people occasionally indulge in individual acts or attitudes of "prejudice." Racist, sexist or homophobic individuals are usually denounced as detractors from "real" punk principles, as if punk were *inherently* anti-racist, -sexist or -homophobic. But both blunt-object and garden-variety racisms are only part of race as it's understood as a *system of classification*, one that overdetermines all our institutions and intersects with other social categories (gender, class, sexuality) and capital.

Simply put, racial hegemony is big, scary and messy.

This is not me pointing fingers and saying, "You're a racist! And so is he! And her, too!" When I say "whitestraightboy," I want to invoke how the category is socially constructed with all kinds of privileges attached. I don't mean to indict everybody who "fits"—why, I have a number of friends who are white boys (*she said, batting her lashes in innocence...*). This is me, however, confronting a widespread phenomenon in punk called "Dodging Accountability for My Privilege(s)." That is, I want to insert the idea of "power" into the conversation.

And power isn't always obvious. We can point to the State and say, "Now, that's power, sonny!" But where, or *how*, do we locate oppressive ideologies? This is where power gets slippery because it seeps into everything—even our language.

This means we have to look at race not as something as simple as "color" discrimination, but as a system or structure of power that's deployed—in any number of ways—within any given historical moment. (I'm going to say the word "power" again and again, so get used to it.)

That said, how exactly *does* race get talked about in punk?

The "Dude, Punk is Equal Opportunity!" Syndrome

Reading *MaximumRockandRoll* is like dredging sewers for corpses; the stink is something awful. *MRR* tends to epitomize the "angry white male" knee-jerk response so popular to the national neurosis, only with spikes and three chords. Trading on crude stereotypes and slurs, the typical *MRR* fan (or columnist, for that matter) will usually assume he (because it's usually a white, hetero "he," but often enough a white, het-

ero "she") is pushing the envelope—"ohhh, I just called that guy a fag, tee hee!"—and then wave his little fist in the air, triumphantly taking recourse to the First Amendment and the Constitution to defend his speech acts. Alternative, my ass. This is known as "equal-opportunity offensiveness"—although if you dare say anything about white straight men and their pencil pricks, you're just being plain mean. Poor babies.

But it's not particular to *MRR* (which may or may not evolve under its new editorship). Punk luminaries from any number of other venues, whether they're *Fucktooth* or AK Press, have learned their lessons well at the knee of free-market (hi, capitalist) ideology: Punk is an open emporium of ideas and you, the supposedly savvy shopper, is "free" to pick and choose. It's a perspective that assumes each individual is happily "rational," "objective," and handily armed with "common sense." Yeah, right. You don't go to the mall with no clothes on and everyone shops the open marketplace of ideas with certain social logics intact. What gets called "rational," "objective" or "common sense" is always, *always* shaped by the ideological baggage someone brings with them (i.e., it's "common sense" that men fuck women and women give birth to babies and it's "nonsense" that men fuck men, women fuck women and babies come from test tubes).

I make this point to reiterate how problematic punk's "rugged individualism" is for any expression of politics because of the ways in which it ducks the question of power. Artist Jenny Holzer wrote, "The idea of transcendence obscures oppression," and punk is not an exception. From punk's hyper-individualism, it's a slippery slope to the kinds of neo-conservative political arguments suggesting, among other things, that affirmative action is "unfair" (like structural inequalities aren't) and why don't more of "those people" (welfare recipients, immigrants, whatever) just pull on those bootstraps? You know you've read those kinds of opinions in the pages of many a fanzine.

Talk about American mythologies. It's the punk version of Manifest Destiny and the Lone Ranger, re-imagining the Wild West for disaffected and mostly white youth. It's a privilege to believe that you can extract yourself from the context of social relations and imagine yourself the sole shaper of your fate. It's the kind of attitude that puts big obstacles in the way of asking

the critical questions about *why* punk is largely white, heterosexual and male, and *why* punk's politics look the way they do.

Invisibility rules (not), OK?

The most famous liberal response to the question of race is compounded by the shrug—the color-blind approach that would have us believe "we're all just human" or, in this case, "we're all just punk." Color-blindness suggests that race is *only* skin deep; that beneath is something more fundamental. It's a typically power-evasive move, one that pretends that individuals don't operate within the context of uneven social relations.

The call to transcend differences obscures the material and psychic effects of living in a maligned body—of racial, sexual or national not-belonging.

And of course, it's always those of us who are "other"—non-white, non-Western, non-hetero, non-male—who are called upon to "transcend" these to become generically "just human"—to enter a neutral state which presumably white straight men have got down pat *without even trying*.

Even on the most surface level, the process of making sure everybody is "just punk" glosses over the histories of people of color because, so the story goes, *it doesn't matter what "color" they are*. But of course it *does* matter—the reasons why I got involved with punk have everything to do with my refugee-queer background, the way I came to understand myself as "alien" in a white working-class neighborhood in central Minnesota. And it might be hugely significant for kids who are otherwise wondering what the hell this white Punk Rock has to do with them, anyway.

But worse, this insistence that "we're all the same" leads to all kinds of equivalences that just make no sense at all. That is, "blue hair" discrimination *does not* even come close to rivaling racism. And if one more punk asks me to explain the difference between calling someone a "whiteboy" or calling someone a "nigger" or a "chink," blood is seriously gonna flow. It's called history, people.

As Minor Threat's "Guilty of Being White," Black Flag's "White Minority," the Avenger's "White Nigger," or even Heavens to Betsy's "White Girl," aptly demonstrate, not all states of alienation are alike or "equal." That is, *mine does not match up neatly with yours*.

Where's the riot, white girl?

and yeah some of you say we are "out to kill white boy mentality" but have you examined your own mentality? Your white upper-middle class girl mentality? what would you say if i said that i wanted to kill that mentality too? would you say: "what about sisterhood?!"

—Lauren Martin

You Might As Well Live 4 (Spring 1997)

When it first delivered a good, swift kick to the masculinist punk paradigm where it counted most, riot girl marked the not-so-generic-after-all "whitestraightpunkboy." Riot girl confronted the popular illusion of the "abstract (punk) citizen" and forced punk to examine its given categories of ex-/inclusion. And while previous—and, I think, less radical—manifestations of feminist politics in punk went the way of grim assertions of equality, riot girl *made you look*. That is, riot girl practiced an unabashedly *embodied* polemic, exercising an oppositional body politic that ruptured the foundation myth of punk egalitarianism.

I truly believe that riot girl was—and is—the best thing that ever happened to punk—please, quote me on that. Riot girl critically interrogated how power, and specifically sexism, organized punk. Unfortunately, riot girl often reproduced structures of racism, classism, and (less so) heterosexism in privileging a generalized "we" that primarily described the condition of mostly white, mostly middle-class women and girls. For students of feminist history, second wave feminism—also white-dominated—stumbled over the same short-sighted desire to universalize what weren't very universal definitions of "woman," "the female condition," and "women's needs."

Again, all differences are not created equal. In the heyday of the second wave, Euro-American feminists caught a lot of flak for comparing (white, middle-class) housework to (black) slavery and riot girls are hardly innocent—I've read work by white girls abusing the loaded symbolism of black skin to describe the condition of fat discrimination. Hierarchizing oppressions isn't the point, but historicizing oppressions and accounting for material inequalities *is*.

"A friend of color equals better living!"

Once race finally came up in conversation, a deluge of white punk/girl confessions flooded the arena. Suddenly everyone was

"working" on his or her privileges. Because I'm a demanding girl I'm not impressed—the ways in which "accountability" gets defined and expressed are really problematic. So when p-rock individualism meets riot girl's insistence that we take it in the backyard, sometimes not-so-revolutionary things happen. The result is often self-referential, guilt-stricken confessions, broken record-style (evil Mimi pipes up, "I blame emo!"). I read in one white girl's zine, "i work on the racist thoughts and actions that are just totally subconscious, but i still feel weird about everything. i don't have any friends who are of color. i don't know how to react to people of color." Um, what? Just who was this written for, anyway?

From another emo-zine: "i'm working on my sexism, classism, racism... my revolution deals with me. these are things i am doing to make myself feel better."

And another: "[She] told me that if I wanted to understand and work on my racism, classism, sexism... that I need to actively pursue intimate relationships with less privileged people and prove that I can be a real ally to them."

Revolution narrowly defined as individual self-improvement ("I'm doing this for me!") isn't much of a revolution. Again, it's a national phenomena: social change shrinks to fit. It's a popular "Band-Aid" liberal response to structural inequalities, something akin to "love sees no color" or "I have black friends." I've even read zines that define racism as a "lack of love," easily remedied once, "we all recognize each other as family." (This is me, puking.)

The original feminist maxim "the personal is political" registered a transformative logic. Certain personal experiences, like rape, were reinterpreted as social phenomena with histories and political consequences. This was—and *is*—still a revolutionary concept that grounds politics in our everyday lives. But when *all* politics become personal, they become removed from both history and immediate social realities so that "race" is acknowledged only as this frozen thing "we" (a conditional, white-ish "we") have to be more "sensitive" to. Meanwhile, social change on any other level is put off and rarely addressed. God knows I'm not the first girl to utter all kinds of blasphemies about the ways in which we organize or "do" activism, but getting down to brass tacks, I still think social justice is, you know, *important*.

Moreover, the whole "pursuing friendships with the less privileged" has a real creepy paternalistic vibe. Like other liberal approaches to race, it not only commodifies the "racial other" ("How many friends of color can you collect?") but again denies individual deep complicity with the systematic structures of race and racism. What's uniquely annoying here is the whole "it'll make me a better person/I'm working on my racism" confessional spin—it's ultimately self-serving, self-referential, and, really, arrogant. As a friend of mine put it, "It makes befriending folks of color sound like a pottery class: *personally enriching*."

In/appropriate behavior

But my I.D. is your novelty

—Sta-prest

"Let's Be Friendly With Our Friends,"

Let's Be Friendly EP

Appropriation is easy—it supposedly lets us off all kinds of hooks, as if the desire to be near, speak for, or even *be* the Other, was in itself an antiracist strategy. A few years ago in a zine called *Wrecking Ball*, two girls conducted an interview with one another that neatly "Ate the Other," to paraphrase black feminist bell hooks, taking the notion of "colonizing blackness" to new levels. Citing a "possible Ethiopian ancestor," a white girl shared with the reading public her decision to "claim" blackness. This was framed as a big antiracist breakthrough. She then went on to speak about an "us" that was defined as "African people all over the world," ignoring the *enormous* material privileges of being nationally and racially Euro-American. Romanticizing blackness and black oppression, she of course doesn't have to actually *live* in a black body. And the emphasis here on a depoliticized "love" (she insists "we are family") performs a kind of amnesia—disguised as something utopian—by abandoning an analysis or engagement with structural inequalities for a privatized, individualized solution.

And I admit, the Make-Up—with their white-ish gospel thing—bother me. Not that I have anything invested in authenticity. I don't believe that "culture" is or should be understood as static or unchanging, but call me cynical, I'm suspicious of Western avant-garde (including punk) claims to transgress bour-

geois banality channeled through acts of cultural confiscation. Can the Make-Up exist without referencing Elvis' gift to rock 'n' roll: making black music safe for white folk? This isn't a judgment call as much as it's a demand to critically examine the dynamics of any so-called exchange.

There's always room for leftovers...

Other ways to *not* account for privilege—or at least do it badly? Out-and-out condescension is *always* an option:

There's always talk in punk of "making room" for the voices of people of color, talk that never quite examines the power relations involved—who's making this room anyway?

And we can't forget the "my great-grandmother was an Irish immigrant" narrative that romanticizes the past in order to evade complicity and privilege in the now.

Or the "voice of the voiceless" syndrome: Rich white kids talking about people of color or Third World revolutions while avoiding their own role in systems of domination. That is, avoiding—for one thing—the power implicit in presuming to be the "voice" for a population assumed to be otherwise "voiceless."

And there is, of course, the increasingly popular "race traitor" card—Anarchists really like this one. Called the "new abolitionism," the formula is pretty straightforward: If enough individual whites voluntarily *decide* not to be white, creating some sort of critical mass of "ex-white" people, racial inequality will be toppled by their collective sacrifice and we can all rejoice. Saved by the white—I mean, "ex-white"—people.

Do I need to say it again? You know the drill, but here's the buzzwords: rugged individualism, accountability, uneven power relations. *Go.*

"What the hell now?"

Coalition politics for a punk age

There are lots of zines that do good—often *amazing*—work on cultural politics and the social and psychic relations of race in punk:

Keyan Meymand's *Kreme Koolers*, Bianca Ortiz's *Mamasita*, Kristy Chan's *Tennis & Violins*, Rita Fatila's *Pure Tuna Fish*, Lauren Martin's *You Might As Well Live*, *Chop Suey Spex*, and *The Bakery*, just to name a few. And again, there are always those writers and activists who are doing a lot of important work around institutional racisms—interrogating the nitty-gritty structural issues and ideological underpinnings of urban underdevelopment, environmental racism/toxic dumping, the prison-industrial complex, welfare reform, affirmation action, and yes, US foreign policy. They can and *do* write responsibly, accounting

blow ətɪd w s (tɒn) ə'tɪ

PUNK DOESN'T EXIST IN A VACUUM. EVEN ON THE MOST SUPERFICIAL LEVEL, RECRUITMENT, WHILE FUN, ISN'T A SOLUTION. DIVERSIFICATION OF OUR MEMBERSHIP ROLLS IS WAY DIFFERENT THAN AFFECTING CRITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS AT THE ANALYTIC LEVEL—AND IN ANY CASE HARDLY ADDRESSES THE PEOPLE OF COLOR WHO ARE IN OR AROUND PUNK NOW. (WE'RE HERE, THANKS. BANGING OUR HEADS AGAINST THE WALL, MAYBE, BUT WE'RE HERE.)

neɪʒuŋ ɪmɪm ɪd ɪn pʌŋk nɪ ɪəʊz ɪn ʒnɪkɒl

for their social location, aware of how that might position them in relation to the subjects about which they're writing.

Punk doesn't exist in a vacuum. Even on the most superficial level, recruitment, while fun, isn't a solution. Diversification of our membership rolls is way different than affecting critical transformations at the analytic level—and in any case hardly addresses the people of color who are in or around punk *now*. (We're here, thanks. Banging our heads against the wall, maybe, but we're here.) What needs to happen—on a punk-scale and a large-scale sort of way—is a revolution in the ways in which we frame ourselves within social, psychic and polit-

ical relations. If you can read Noam Chomsky, you can also read Chandra Mohanty, Andrew Ross, or Lauren Berlant. If you don't know who they are, *find out*.

What all this *doesn't* mean is, "I can't talk about anything because I'm a white, straight male." That's too easy—too often an excuse not to do your homework. I don't believe that the specific plot-points of your social location have to determine your conscious political agenda (i.e., there's no one-to-one correspondence between the two) and I'm way over the "more oppressed than thou" calculus. I'd like to think my praxis is more complicated than that. And no, I'm not "just like" you but hey, coalitions are risky—and hopefully productive—that way.

So if you're white, own your whiteness (and yes, I realize that people live their whiteness differently according to how it intersects with gender, class, sexuality, et cetera, within their personal context). Don't assume whiteness describes the world. Challenge others when they do. My friend Iraya—Aloofah of the sadly defunct multiracial multisubcultural queer pop ensemble Sta-Prest—calls it "doing the white on white."

You (and I mean everybody now) *can* be accountable to your social location. Interrogate and historicize your place in society, punk, whatever, and be aware of how you talk about race, gender, sexuality—it's political. Examine all the categories you're using at least *twice* for

hidden assumptions, exclusions, erasures. Recognize power in all its forms, how it operates. Engage it, even use it strategically. And work *with* me, not for me.

Actively creating a public culture of dissent—punk or not—will have to involve some self-reflexive unpacking of privileges/poverties and their historical and political contexts. Here's my bid, where's yours? ©

Mimi Nguyen edited a compilation zine called Evolution of a Race Riot. 100 pages of writing about race and identity by kids of color in punk/girl, you could get it from her, maybe, if she feel like giving it to you. Ask her at slantgirl@aol.com.

Is the Lewinsky affair the most morally corrupt act of the Clinton presidency? Close, but no cigar.

Better Reasons To Not Like Bill Clinton

compiled by Jon Strange

While those clamoring for President Clinton's impeachment charge that the President has acted immorally in his various sexual escapades, it seems some important violations of common morality have been overlooked. The President's sexual activity is irrelevant in contrast to the full-scale attack he has waged on workers, women, the uninsured, HIV positive people, the underprivileged, homosexuals, and immigrants since taking office in 1993. In the past six years, he has infringed upon the sovereignty of foreign states, violated basic civil rights, broken promises to increase sexual and racial equality, downsized the welfare system, and paved the way for big business to run right over us all. All of Washington is up and arms right now over the President's morality. You wanna talk morals? Let's talk about this:

1. NAFTA By ushering in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), President Clinton sold out the interests of working Americans and guaranteed big profits for his corporate sponsors. The ramifications of NAFTA on labor rights and the environment have effectively undermined the successes of organized labor and environmental action groups. In a survey commissioned by the NAFTA Labor Secretariat, over half the US firms surveyed were found to have used the threat of relocation (usually to Mexico) as a tool to undermine the bargaining power of labor unions. Post-NAFTA, the number of firms that actually did relocate all or part of a plant to Mexico was triple the number in the late '80s.

As if the low wages of the Mexican labor force weren't enticement enough for business, the complete lack of environmental regulations over air quality and industrial emissions found in Mexico make it an even more attractive option for US companies looking to avoid restrictions on their environmentally irresponsible practices.

2. Welfare "Reform" In the most significant legislative initiative of his two terms in office, Clinton advocated and signed into law welfare reforms, which cut hundreds of thousands of Americans from assistance programs they relied upon for basic survival. By axing Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid, food stamps and subsidized rent programs, Clinton has left those in need of economic assistance with few options and little to turn to for help. Single mothers requiring economic assistance are particularly under attack as their state-sponsored support is pulled out from under them. Furthermore, in signing the Personal Responsibility Act, Clinton was responsible for serious infringements on rights to privacy (which he holds so dear himself), in the law's requirement that single mothers tell judges and welfare officials the names of men they have had sex with and to detail how often, where and when. If they refuse this intrusion into their privacy, they can be denied welfare, Medicaid, or food stamps.

3. HIV Ignorance By instating a permanent ban on federal funding for needle-exchange programs, President Clinton is directly responsible for an estimated 12,000 people becoming infected with HIV in the past 5 years. This number includes intravenous drug users, their sex partners and children. Though overwhelming medical opinion endorses needle exchange programs for their efficacy in preventing the spread of infection, Clinton has refused to provide federal funding towards this effort. Incredibly, five years after making the ban permanent, he admitted that in fact these programs do prevent HIV transmission—and still he didn't change his policy!

And, in a stunning display of his disdain for human life, Clinton refused to allow approximately 200 HIV positive Haitian political refugees into the country, instead confining them to a barbed-wire-enclosed refugee camp in Guantanamo Bay until their eventual release was ordered by a federal judge.

4. The Bombing of Sudan and Afghanistan In violation of domestic and international law, President Clinton authorized the recent bombings in Sudan and Afghanistan, despite a noticeable lack of evidence that the pharmaceutical plant in Sudan was actually engaged in producing chemical weapons, as was claimed by Clinton and his advisors. Though Secretary of Defense William Cohen stated that soil samples obtained outside the factory showed a concentration of Empta, a chemical used to create VX nerve gas, even President Clinton's own former CIA director James Woolsey was critical of the decision: "This should not be the kind of decision made only with three or four people around you of Cabinet-level who don't know an Empta sample from their left foot," he told the *London Times*.

5. Deportation Laws In a particularly xenophobic and misdirected effort to prevent terrorism, President Clinton's new Immigration Bill allows for immigrants to the US to be deported for any terrorist activity or drug activity. Since the language of this bill is shockingly broad, it effectively restricts the political activity of even legal permanent resident aliens—even participation in a peaceful protest could conceivably be construed as terrorist activity. Furthermore, while the legislation intends to restrict major drug dealers, its vague language clearly allows room to deport those who use drugs "recreationally." In fact, this has already happened, in a case in California where a man who had been legally residing in the US for over a dozen years was deported following a simple marijuana possession conviction.

6. Sanctions Against Iraq By continuing the murderous policy of sanctions against Iraq, Clinton is responsible for the deaths of more than 500,000 Iraqi children. Most of these deaths have been caused by preventable ailments, such as malnourishment, asthma, and intestinal parasites. Though Iraq has the capability to prevent and treat these ailments, it lacks the basic medicine, clean water, and food to do so, largely due to the sanctions.

As if all this wasn't enough to ensure that Iraqis have little hope for survival, last June a US fighter fired an air-to-ground missile at a water reservoir near Basra, destroying southern Iraq's main source of fresh drinking water. Clinton's continuation of Gulf War-era UN sanctions is the centerpiece of a policy designed to guarantee a controlling US force in the Middle East and prevent oil-producing countries from asserting their political independence from the United States.

7. What Environment? Although Vice President Al Gore is publicly known for his commitment to the environment, his concern has made little impact on President Clinton. Clinton is the first president in this century to have not enacted any significant legislation designed to preserve or protect the environment. Even President Bush did better than that.

8. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Though he made frequent promises during his 1992 campaign to ensure the rights of homosexuals in the military, Clinton immediately backpedaled on this issue soon after taking office. By settling on the ludicrous "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, President Clinton tacitly condones discrimination against non-heterosexual American citizens.

9. The Sellout of Universal Health Care In a total mockery of his campaign promises, President Clinton has yet to introduce any real plans to provide universal health care coverage. Following an incredibly weak proposal crafted by the Clinton Administration that was essentially a sellout to insurance lobbyists, health care coverage was effectively dismissed as a priority for the President. Though this issue was one of the most popular elements of his 1992 campaign platform, it hasn't been pursued since and millions of Americans remain without adequate health care coverage.

Given that most people who do have health insurance receive it as an employment benefit, and that most uninsured people are either unemployed or part-time employees, the President's cuts in Medicaid are especially alarming. Rather than providing health care to everyone, Clinton has in fact done the opposite—he has taken it away from those who need it most: poor single mothers and their children.

10. The Defense of Marriage Act By signing the Christian Coalition-sponsored Defense of Marriage Act, Clinton affirmed his homophobic political disposition, refusing to accord same-sex partnerships the same legal recognition available to straight couples. Clinton, who during his 1992 campaign appeared to be at least slightly support gay rights, once again challenged the possibility of equal constitutional rights for all gender orientations by endorsing institutionalized discrimination against an entire sexual class of Americans.

Further solidifying his position, he also refused to lift a finger to make anti-gay violence a federal bias crime, perpetuating decades of legislated discrimination against queer Americans. ©

RETURN TO THE HOLY LAND

My heart was beginning to race.

I had arrived at Detroit Airport in preparation for the first leg of my trip home to see my family in Israel. The boarding area was overflowing. In front of me stood several young traditionally garbed Palestinian women wearing chadors around their heads. Their small children, dressed in blue jeans and Nirvana T-shirts milled about nervously as easily recognizable young Israeli security agents talked into their collars, slim wires snaking up their cleanly shaven necks from underneath pressed Oxford shirts into huge, fish-belly white ears. Their eyes scanned the Palestinians in the waiting area looking for potential problems. I caught one of them staring at me and said "Shalom Habibi." Caught off guard by my Hebrew, he quickly looked away.

This would be the first time I had traveled home to Tel Aviv in the company of Arabs. I wondered what it would be like to sit next to a Palestinian, what kind of questions they'd ask, where they'd tell me they came from. A month before I'd ridden in a cab in Seattle. I could tell by the driver's accent that he was Palestinian. When I asked him where he originally came from he answered, "Yahud." That was the name of the old Arab town I lived next to as a child, just outside Tel Aviv.

"I used to live in Savyon," I replied.

"Then you are my brother," he answered warmly, looking back at me through the rear view mirror of the taxi with a huge, round beaming smile—much like the one he inspired in me.

I remembered that moment as I waited in line. "God," I thought to myself. "What a nice change." When I was a child, only Jews, American businessmen and military advisors crowded planes bound for Israel. The only place I ever saw Arabs was working on construction projects in Tel Aviv as migrant day laborers or on weekend trips to East Jerusalem where my father and I would go to buy Turkish coffee and Persian rugs at discount prices from flea market merchants in the dank smelling old city. To travel with Palestinians felt like a sign of the progress that was made in the peace negotiations between Israel and the PLO. But as I stared out at the mixed Arab-Israeli crowd, I wondered if I was looking at the only sign of progress left over from the Rabin era.

As much as I wished this scene was a sign of real progress, as the plane took off, the television newscaster on the video screen in front of me announced that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had been sealed off again. Freedom of movement between the two territories through Israel had once again been frozen because a van driven by a Palestinian exploded in midday traffic in downtown Jerusalem. Someone had rear-ended it by accident, setting alight a cache of gasoline, nails and explosives that the minivan had been carrying in preparation for a truck bombing. The driver was badly burned but he survived. Predictably, Israel blamed the PLO for not taking tight enough security measures against Muslim militant organi-

zations. Prime Minister Netanyahu told reporters that the thwarted terrorist demonstrated that Arafat still can't be trusted to control his own people. Peace talks had again been suspended. It was back to business as usual.

Once I'd eaten dinner, I turned on my Powerbook and starting reading hundreds of pages worth of articles downloaded from Israeli and Arab newspapers on the Internet. I was determined to re-acquaint myself with what was going on in the region. It all felt like a missing part of me I had to get to know again. It was the first time I'd voluntarily immersed myself in Middle Eastern media since I was a child. I left Israel permanently in 1980. A trip to attend my niece's Bat Mitzvah, this was only my third trip home in 18 years.

I came of draft age while living in Portland in 1985 and I decided not to return home because I did not want to serve in the Israeli Army. We'd already invaded Lebanon by then and killed thousands of civilians in order to quash a nascent Palestinian army. The war made me sick to my stomach. Watching tanks roll over houses in Sidon, Tyre, the Bekaa Valley and Beirut every night on CNN convinced me that there were no more just wars to be fought on behalf of the Jewish state. Better to be an American despite all the stupid and immoral contradictions, I thought. Better to study the country from afar through the eyes of *The Oregonian* and *The New York Times* than by being a not-so-nice Jewish boy in uniform.

Comfortable in my plane seat, I eventually fell asleep. When I woke up, the plane was landing in Amsterdam. I hurriedly packed my carry on bags and rushed into the terminal ahead of all the other connecting passengers. The only thing I could think of was drinking a cup of coffee and smoking a cigarette. Low and behold, as soon as I disembarked, there was an espresso stand straight ahead. I ordered a double cappuccino, a croissant and an orange juice. Within minutes I'd consumed them all. As I fumbled through my backpack looking for my smokes, I looked up and saw the Palestinian women I boarded the plane with doing exactly the same thing. After I lit my first cigarette in 12 hours, I looked over at them, and they looked back at me. We all acknowledged we were performing the same ritual and laughed. Looking up at the clock, we stubbed our butts out and hurried to catch our next flight.

As I entered immigration to board the aircraft I had to run through a phalanx of Dutch soldiers armed with machine guns and hand held computers. The first soldier whom I dealt with looked up at me after he ran my American passport information through his miniature PC and said, "Aren't you an Israeli citizen?"

"No," I told him, "Not any more."

He smiled and asked why.

"Because I stayed in America to go to university," I replied.

"Well according to my records you are still an Israeli, Mister Schlitz."

Please check in with immigration when you get to Tel Aviv. You might have some problems with them." Just what I needed.

Nothing inspires greater fear in me than passing through passport control in Tel Aviv because I never formally renounced my Israeli citizenship. Every time I've gone through immigration at Ben Gurion airport, my identity check goes awry and I am always asked why I don't travel on my Israeli passport. I always tell them that it's not important. They look at me kind of funny and start barking in Hebrew. My policy is to always reply in English. Why not just save the pain and just get an Israeli passport? Because if I came home using Israeli ID, I'd be read the riot act about draft dodging and end up in the military.

As I lay half asleep on the final leg of my flight, I dreamed of finally being arrested. The words of a retired military friend of my father's kept creeping into my head. "Yoel, we sure could use you in weapons procurement in New York. Think of how nice it would be. You wouldn't have to leave America, but you'd still get to serve the state." I shuddered and broke out into a cold sweat.

At that point my seat mate finally turned to me and introduced herself. Her name was Erika and was travelling from Rotterdam to work on a Kibbutz. "They're one of the last socialist communities left in the world," she explained. "I thought I'd get my chance before they disappeared altogether."

"That's probably a good idea," I muttered rather cynically, expecting her to be shocked at all the high tech industrial work being done on Kibbutzim these days. Not eager to carry on the conversation with this starry eyed, hippie-looking young leftist seeking salvation in agrarian socialism, I fell asleep again. I awoke as I felt the wheels of my plane touching the ground.

Bleary-eyed from my 18 hour journey, I looked out at the airport tarmac and saw several rows of camouflage Israeli C-130 Hercules transport planes parked in the distance. I slowly stumbled out, laptop in hand, thinking that I needed to check my email and get another cup of coffee. We boarded a bus, and drove to the waiting area, where all of the Palestinian women I'd been traveling with cut in front of me. Determined to be a nice liberal guy, I let them, only to find myself stuck in the slowest line at immigration. No one gets treated worse than a Palestinian in an Israeli airport.

An hour and a half later, it was my turn. As usual, the immigration officers giggled when they asked where my Israeli passport was and I told them I had none. They insisted on speaking to me in Hebrew. I finally gave in and replied. It felt good. Inhabiting that tongue—as broken as mine is—was weirdly reassuring, despite the fact that my Hebrew has gotten horrible. The officers smiled, handed me my papers and said in the most sweet and endearing voices, "Litrood Yoel."

As I carried my bags into the waiting area, I expected to hear my father Elie whistling after me from within the huge crowd of eastern-European looking, pale Jewish people whose heavy Slavic accents suggested they were recent immigrants. But my dad wasn't there. I started to get nervous, thinking he had forgotten to pick me up. I put my bags down. Finally, someone yelled out "Shalom Yoel." It was dad's friend, Israel, sent to pick me up.

The drive to Caesaria was long. We passed Bar-Ilan University, the most important breeding ground in Israel for the training of religious nationalist Jews like Yigal Amir, the assassin of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. I'd received an e-mail from an American Biblical scholar who taught there just before Rabin's assassination. He'd written to me about an article I'd published in the online zine *Bad Subjects* called "Free To Be Jew and Me." It was about how Jews tend to fetishize their own victim status and how that gets played out in Arab-Jewish relations. He

didn't like it.

It's really weird coming home. The country always looks busier. Everything is always new. The cars are all shiny, the soldiers all have fancier looking guns. The highways are lined with American stores. Actually, Israel looks a lot like Los Angeles to me.

"Who can complain?" Israel asked on the drive as he pointed to an Office Depot/Toys Are Us/Ace Hardware shopping complex to our left. "Under socialism, all we had were the necessary items and even then they were always in short supply. Now everything is easier, even though Netanyahu looks like he'll ruin it for us again."

"Y'all elected him," I answered. "Israel should have known better."

We stopped for gas at a small petrol station on the coastal highway between Ramat Ha Sharon and Netanya. A young Sephardi attendant in blue coveralls, pierced ears, '60s GI issue black plastic frame indie-rock-dork glasses and a thick black ponytail hanging down his back immediately filled the tank up. We got back on the highway without paying the attendant. "Why didn't you give him money for gas?" I asked.

Israel smiled. "It's a new system we have here where your bank is immediately debited your petrol purchases through gas stations taking down your license number," he responded. "It's a modern country now Yoel. Things have changed a lot since you lived here. Its no longer in between the first and the third worlds."

We finally departed the highway and started the approach to my father's house. Huge brick walls surround the house he designed and built himself, having finally achieved affluence in his old age. Telephones are ringing, faxes are coming in, beepers are going off, Spanish, Hebrew, English and German can be heard in the distance. My tall, formerly blond-haired and blue-eyed 78-year-old father emerges from his office and gives me his characteristically he-man like hug. My frame shudders with intense pain. My father's face is beaming. "Welcome home, child."

I drank some espresso and sat down and scanned the English edition of *Ha'aretz*. Five soldiers were critically wounded in Southern Lebanon when they walked into an ambush laid for them by Iranian-backed Hezbollah guerrillas. A remote controlled bomb blew them up while they were on a routine patrol within Israel's self-declared 30-kilometer security zone in southern Lebanon. The newspaper listed their names, ranks, hometowns and ages. No one was over 22. The soldiers all had Eastern European sounding last names—most likely they were recent immigrants.

Next to that story was a piece on how the Israeli economy had deteriorated since Netanyahu took power two years ago. Unemployment was hovering at nearly 13 percent. Welfare services were being cut. The salaries of civil servants were being frozen, despite a large increase in the cost of living. In order to slash the deficit, government-owned businesses were being sold off to foreign investors. "It's just like America," remarked one commentator.

Underneath was an article on the forthcoming first Gay Pride Day ever to be held in Israel. The religious authorities were, of course, condemning it. Israel's transsexual disco superstar, Dana International, was scheduled to sing her hit "Diva" on a parade float as the day's highlight. I stared at a picture of Dana in all her transgressive, dangerously erotic glory, "What a big middle finger to the establishment," I thought to myself. "It's so punk rock. God, its good to be back home."

Feeling a little-overwhelmed by it all, I went out on the porch and stared out at the early night sky. Several Cobra and Apache attack

helicopters were flying south in formation over a golf course, probably headed home from a retaliatory raid. I turned around and walked back inside. I was tired.

...

"Time to eat, junior," bellowed my dad in his 1950s *Leave it to Beaver* English. "We're going to a place where they serve your favorite food." Nothing makes me happier than eating Arab food. Some of my best memories from my childhood were driving to the Palestinian town of Ramallah and eating at my father's favorite restaurants. However, it was now impossible to drive there because Ramallah resides within the newly autonomous cantons governed by the Palestinian Authority, or PA as it is called. We'd go to an Israeli restaurant that served the same dishes instead.

We drove down a narrow, badly paved road through a field. My father's truck bumped and heaved. Small, dilapidated old houses with red tiled roofs lined the side of the street. This was the old Israel I knew. Dusty, old, semi-rural. I was in for a shock. All of the sudden we entered an American-style shopping plaza. In front of us stood a McDonalds. To our right lay another Ace Hardware with overweight Hasidic men with Brooklyn accents streaming out of the front door. On our left was our destination, the 206 Restaurant, named after the area code of Seattle.

As we parked the car, several Arab women wearing chadors and carrying McDonalds bags walked by. "Where are we?" I asked.

"A Kibbutz," my father replied.

Stunned, I screamed, "You must be joking!"

"No Yoel," my father replied. "Israel's catching up to Europe. Even the old Kibbutznik Reds are embracing market socialism. Everything here is collectively owned, even the American fast food restaurant."

I thought back to Erika, the Dutch woman I met on the airplane. I wondered if her pursuit of "one of the last socialist communities" had her working at a collectively owned McDonalds. It was too much. I wanted to throw up.

...

The next day flew by in an absolutely chaotic frenzy. After visiting a new shopping mall with my stepmother Ana in the neighboring town of Ofakim, where Babushka-wearing Russian women strolled through the supermarket carrying shopping carts full of Wonder Bread, beets, and imported Birds Eye frozen peas, I finally felt like the foreigner Israelis perceived me to be. So much had changed. There was so much affluence, so much culture, so many things American, and yet so little peace of mind. I took leave of Ana for a moment and wandered the aisles in a jet-lagged daze thinking about diva Dana International and the helicopter gunships flying over golf courses, recalling the daily casualty reports in the newspaper. As I picked up a quarter-pound bag of Lavazza espresso imported from Italy, I realized that I had to get a grip on myself. I may have come home to attend a Bat Mitzvah and reacquaint myself with the sentimental pleasantries of a Labor Zionist childhood, but I felt like I was getting shock treatment in the brutal lessons of post-war global capitalism instead.

When we got home, my father—never one to truly leave his military background behind—handed me my itinerary. I was to go pick my brother David and his family up at the airport. Then I was supposed to drive them to Jerusalem, where we were to meet at a Moroccan restaurant just off of Jaffa Street, Jerusalem's main drag.

I immediately hopped into Elie's Korean-made truck and made the two-hour journey in rush hour traffic. As I merged onto the highway, I turned on Israeli Army Radio. The disc jockey was playing a song from the latest Tortoise album, *TNT*, followed by Combustible Edison, Wyclef Jean

and Nusrat Ali Khan. I laughed. Tortoise an Israeli Army favorite? Who woulda thunk? The amusement was enough to keep me going all the way to the airport. Now that's what I call World Beat.

By the time I got to Ben Gurion airport, my brother David was already emerging from immigration. He looked very tired, but happy to see me. "Gimme a cigarette," he barked.

We smoked together in silence, scanning all the newly arrived visitors. Excited Christian tourists looking for their television minister tour guides; Jewish American teenagers on Zionist Youth Summer vacations; fat Greek Orthodox Patriarchs just off the plane from Athens; blonde German Jesus freaks who looked like hippies carrying huge internal frame packs on their backs bound for cheap Arab youth hostels. "So this is what the great Zionist founders envisioned for the Holy Land," David remarked bitterly. "They built a country so that pilgrims could go sight-seeing in freedom. What a joke."

As we drove up the new highway to Jerusalem, David surveyed the roadside landscape. "Look at all that goddamned sprawl. It's all so thoughtless," David said. "Israelis seem to put up buildings anywhere they want, without reference to the landscape, without lip service to any kind of aesthetics or artistry that would incorporate the architecture into the scenery tastefully. They don't have any concept of zoning laws. It's gross. This all used to be beautiful farmland and now look at it. Cheaply constructed industrial parks with neon billboards. It looks just like southern California"

"I know, David," I said, laughing. "In their haste to create a country, they indiscriminately and thoughtlessly build on top of anything—anywhere there is an iota of construction space to be found. The irony is that these are the fields where the army fought the Jordanians to keep the road to Jerusalem open during the War of Independence." We drove for a while in silence.

Fifty years ago, the new Jewish Army, full of untrained conscripts and death camp survivors recently off the boat from Europe, fought Jordan's mighty Arab Legion here in order to maintain access to Jerusalem. As we enter the forested Judean foothills to begin our ascent to Jerusalem, the rusted wreckage of armored supply trucks destroyed by Jordanian forces still litter the side of the highway. They constitute the final remains of convoys which our father organized and put together in order to supply the Jewish half of Jerusalem in 1948.

Every time we drove to Jerusalem when we were kids, Elie never failed to remind us of this fact. It turned what was supposed to be a joyous, fun trip to an exotic, ancient city into a tour of a roadside mausoleum. We hated Elie for it, because the stories ceased to have any significance in their repetition. They became more like ideological nostalgia for the good old days, when armed struggle was the only priority. At a certain point, I felt that his nostalgia was an excuse rather than a reminder, but I didn't know what the excuse was intended for because I was too young to figure it out.

We were snapped back into the present as we entered the outskirts of Jerusalem, in awe all of the new high rises and housing complexes made of orange Jerusalem stone that rose into the twilight sky to the north. These were Jerusalem's new suburbs, full of American immigrants, some orthodox, most ultra-orthodox—*Hasids* as Americans call them, *Haredim* or "Holy Ones," as they are tagged by Israelis. At a time when Israel is governed by a democratically elected right-wing demagogue who espouses the merciless anti-welfare state ideology of Reagan, Thatcher, Gingrich, Clinton and Blair, the only recipients of increasing welfare handouts and free public housing subsidies are these American fundamentalist Jews inhabiting the hills surrounding Jerusalem.

The Haredim are the final beneficiaries of the old Jewish labor Zionist vision of the early twentieth century, but with a self-serving ideo-

logical twist. They receive public subsidies for partisan political purposes, not out of a genuine desire to give shelter for a minority without a country and without wealth, suffering from centuries of racist discrimination.

Let's face it: The Haredim come from a country where Jews are more equal than any other cultural minority, where a third of the president's cabinet is Jewish and *Seinfeld* is the most popular situation comedy. Nonetheless, the Haredim take advantage of an old egalitarian ideology formulated in the shadow of the Holocaust. They position themselves as self-righteous, scheming pawns in a Machiavellian game constructed by the Jewish New Right in order to establish an eternal presence on the ground that cannot be negotiated in land exchange transactions with the Palestinians.

The sick thing about this is that the Haredim know this only too well, yet they play the game anyway, fighting like hell for every greedy scrap of money, housing and real estate that they can get their collective Rabbinical hands on. They make no apologies for it because, as defenders of the faith, they indignantly insist that it is something that the Jewish world owes to them.

As my father said later that evening, "What these American fundamentalists really want is to turn Israel into a modern day Jewish Iran." I couldn't agree with him more.

After an uneventful dinner, we check into our hotel. My room is on the sixth floor, overlooking the entire city. I light a cigarette, stroll onto the balcony in the pitch-black darkness and look out at the old city. I'm so tired I can barely think, but I find the soft wind on my sweaty body soothing. "A Jewish Iran," I said to myself. "That'd be the ultimate fulfillment of the fundamentalist American dream."

I began to realize that perhaps my fear of surrendering myself to a sadomasochistic religious destiny is exactly that; that what I really fear is what I culturally have in common with a huge percentage of American Jews who want just that, and I feel the unconscious pull towards it because of my Zionist upbringing. My heart began to race as this realization settled in. I took one last look at the sleeping, holy city and turned off the lights. I knew now why I'd come here.

...

It seemed like the phone had been ringing forever. When I finally lifted the receiver, I could hear my father's voice telling me to "get down here immediately child, we have a Bat Mitzvah to go to." Frustrated because I didn't get a chance to drink any coffee, I got dressed and made a mad dash for the elevator.

"So you finally got your ass out of bed, chief," said my oldest brother David as I step into the lobby. "Let's get out of here."

David knows Jerusalem well, and gets us to the entrance of the Old City in minutes. We park, and begin walking in the already hot early morning sunlight to the Damascus gate. Border troops with their trademark bright green berets and folding-butt M16s look around, chattering incessantly on walkie-talkies, fingers resting uneasily on their triggers. We march down dusty stone steps towards a lush, green garden hidden underneath the Tower of David.

After a few moments, the ceremony begins. A conservative Rabbi from the Hebrew University begins speaking in a thick Brooklyn accent. He looks like a typical baby boomer who rediscovered his Jewish roots and decided to immigrate here. The Rabbi begins talking about maturity, and how god views it. Then he introduces my niece Odile—the reason I'm here in the first place—and they start reading the Torah together. Odile's voice is a little shaky. She reads in English.

The Rabbi obliges in Hebrew in call and response pattern, much like a rap song, breaking into prayer every now and then in a lilting New-York-

cum-Eastern-European brogue that raises the hair on the back of my neck. Fifteen minutes later, the Rabbi issues authoritative platitudes about assuming the responsibilities of an adult according to Jewish law. I begin to nod out. Suddenly, the ceremony is over. I'm overwhelmed with relief. But everyone remains silent. My father has taken over.

"It gives me such great pleasure to see my family here today. Nothing makes me happier then to have my children here in Israel in order to celebrate my oldest grandchild's birthday. Especially during such a crucial time in Jewish history as this, when the nation is again dividing itself up into two halves, the pure and the stateists, much like it was in the Old Testament, when the children of Israel divided itself up into two nations: The nation of Israel and the nation of Judah.

"I want to remind you all that this is a repetition of something that happened long ago, and that we must view it in such perspective if we are going to overcome the unjust divisions which my generation was never able to foresee happening again. If we do this, we'll have the resources and the knowledge to know that one day we'll be far beyond this cruel repeat of history, which can only be read as a symptom of the suffering of a long persecuted people unequipped to deal with having become a nation for the first time in 2000 years of tragic history."

As my father left the podium, we all sat there in silence. The only sounds came from the static of soldiers turning their walkie-talkies on and off—white noise bouncing like bursts of automatic gunfire off of the walls of the ancient city which surrounded us. The historical memories which these archaic slabs of stone radiate mingled with the echo of my father's stern words, carried aloft by the sounds of shuffling footsteps of clueless Christian tourists being herded up the steps of the Tower of David by Palestinian tour guides. I caught one of them staring down at me out of the corner of my eye and wondered what they were thinking. Embarrassed, they turned away.

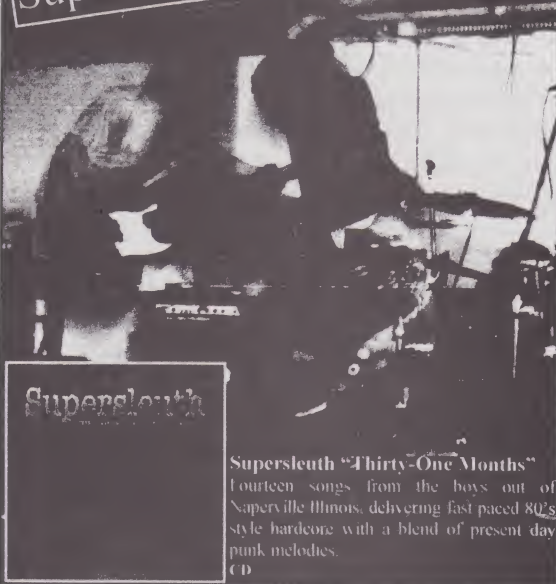
Finally, the Rabbi had us stand and say a closing prayer. *Baruch Ata-Adonai*, everyone sang, *Eluenu Melech Ha Olam*. Tears had started to well up in my eyes. Feeling self-conscious, I wiped them on my sleeve so that nobody would see them. I thought to myself that the significance of this trip wasn't so much just about recognizing my niece Odile's coming of age as much as it was recognizing my entire family's entrance into something resembling political maturity. Not only as a distinct group of people who are biologically related to each other, but as a little microcosm of a new nation that my father had unfortunately raised us to be.

For the first time since I was a child, I was filled with a kind of naïve hope again—the kind that's inspired by watching people learn from their mistakes, knowing that they'll be able to move beyond them. Enough history and enough tragedy had transpired to force everyone in my family to cut through the bullshit ideologies that always disguise a family—or a country—from itself when it's in denial of its own inherent moral contradictions. "All this shit will surely pass," I mumbled under my breath as we left the Old City. "Netanyahu, the killing, the history, the segregation, the religion. Everything." ©

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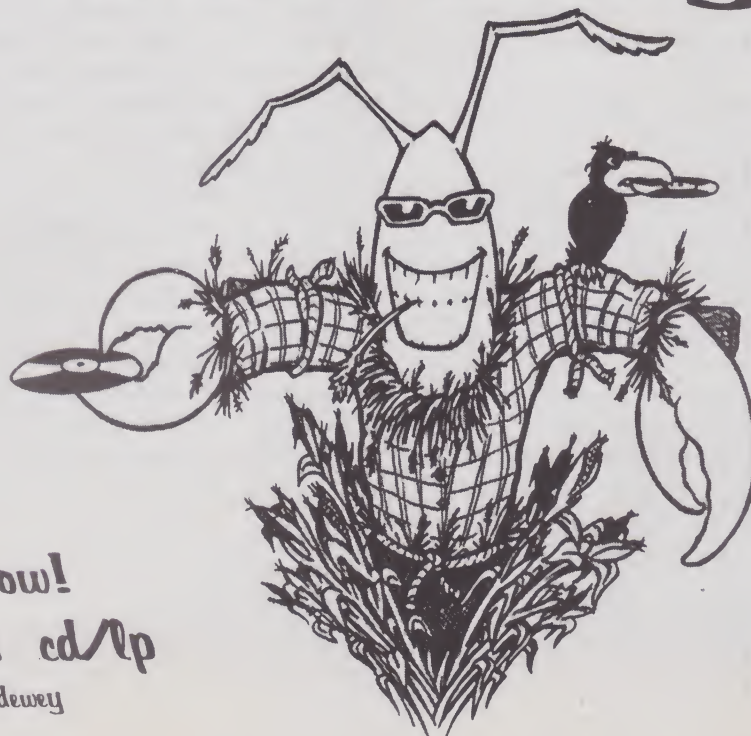
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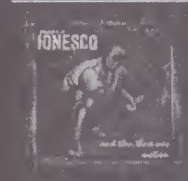
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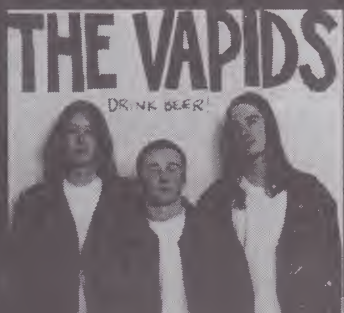
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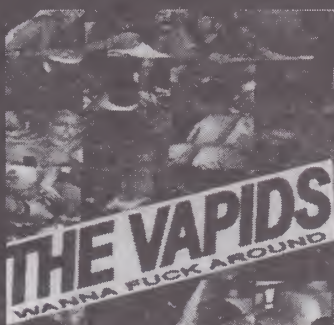
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Goodbye

By Eve Silver

support, soiled sheets. Goodbye.

There have been overdoses before; vague things that exist more in rumor than reality, people who are friends of friends. One overdose before amongst our close ranks, with minor repercussions. Still alive. Those who were with him that night continue to use.



Soon there is idle conversation about where to buy, what's the cheapest, what's the best. The subject which was once taboo is now small talk. Some people walk out of the room. Some people get angry and want to argue and fight. Others leave and stay away. Soon there is a cleft, a small group of activists and a large group of users and those who condone usage. Those in between see the scales continue to tip. Friends seem to fall into the heroin house like artless souls entering a lackluster purgatory.

The cleft grows. Something seems to settle over everything—something dark and unsaid, like a thin grey film. Nights are filled with endless melodrama, broken glass, blood, spontaneous tears. Liquor, reveling, and unconsciousness. The stench of alcohol is the odor of the house, its distinguishing scent, dissolving any possibility of reformation.

Death. An escape from the temptation of failure. Sirens inter-

It starts out as a small time thing. A secret between a few friends amongst the kids in Santa Rosa—small city lives becoming drunk on the dark romanticism of the heroin culture. William S. Burroughs. The Velvet Underground. *Trainspotting*. *Drugstore Cowboy*. *The Basketball Diaries*. A strange world built to exist between living and death. Enticing.

And so it goes, notions give way to certainty. The heroin cycle has begun.

Ryan is the first to die. Coma. Brain dead. Is this the ultimate high? Hospital bed, life

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rupt the tranquility of insobriety.

Morning dawns. Was it a dream? A memory drowned and destroyed in drunkenness waking again to greet the heroin house. Candles burned down to nubs, red wax drips onto the floor. Drip. Drip.

Thump. Thump, an artificial heartbeat, then silence. The plug is pulled.

Eight eyes rest on the soothing glow of the television set. False people with unrelated lives. Predictable. Happy ending, sad ending, but an end and it's over. Stand up and stretch. Urinate. The day winds on and the members of the heroin house continue this strange sort of grieving, stupefaction in the absence of the ability to mourn.

Night falls, and behind closed doors a flame flickers against the smooth metal belly of a spoon.

Wake up in the afternoon. Life goes on, and people talk. It was his fault. He was just naïve. He was willing to die for it. He was addicted. He was different. He was my friend. I didn't really like him much anyway. He was my lover once. We knew it would happen sooner or later.

A banner is hung over the heroin house. We love you Ryan. An empty promise with no strings attached. We loved you. It's not



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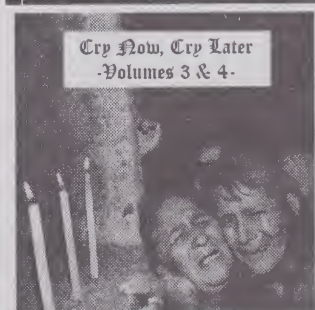
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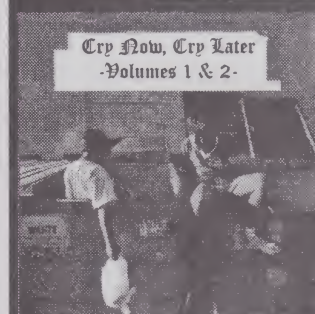


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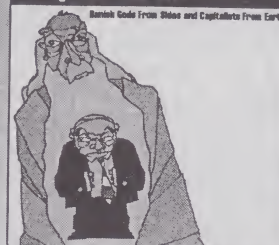
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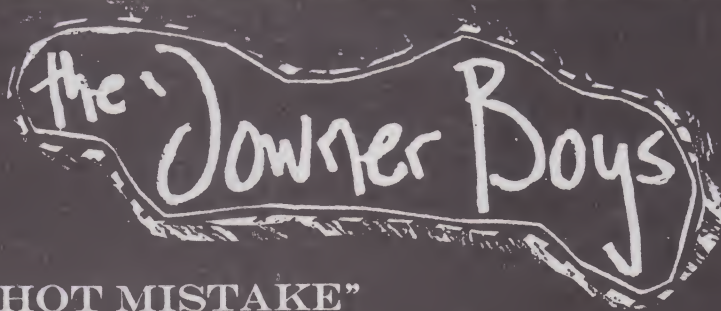
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Mailorder is GO!!!

By Srin Kumar

SMALL BUSINESS IS THE NEW PUNK ROCK.

As the dust from the "You Fucking Sellout!" Wars settles, it's obvious that one of the most important factors keeping the punk underground alive is the strength and diversity of the small businesses that fuel it.

Punk businesses thrive through creating cool jobs—such as enabling artists, writers, and other assorted creatives to reach actual audiences. Rarely do you hear of the same kind of coercive, hierarchical, and inequitable bullshit that characterizes typical capitalism—and never on the same scale. They're DIY, resource- and eco-friendly, non-capital intensive, efficient, fun, diverse, you name it. Certainly there is exploitation and greed in the punk small business scene, but all in all, "punk free enterprise" is pretty cool.

Punk small businesses (and, by extension, almost any business that pursues dreams rather than dollars) kick fucking ass. If you're a social reject like the rest of us, you ought to give serious consideration to starting your own business at some point in your life. Odds are you probably don't fit in wherever it is you work anyway, so the sooner the better.

All we have to do is conspire to unleash the infinite potential within yourself. So let's have at it!

"WHAT? ME SELL OUT?"

For those murmuring "sellout" at this, think about it. America's dependency on wage-slavery makes me sick to my stomach, but punk rockers working shitty exploitative jobs makes me retch. If I see another cool person destroying their carpal tunnels in a temp job or a corporate espresso joint, I am going to weep.

I'm not saying everyone's gotta go start their own businesses, but there are enough brilliant ideas and minds out there reading this article alone to force a change for the better—to rise up and change the world. And we will yet change

the world, we punks. As this magazine's existence attests—despite what you may have heard, *punk ain't dead yet*.

To make a long story short, if your job is fun and teaches you new things, tolerate it until it isn't fun. But if your job sucks, find something new and be brilliant for once.

THAT'S ALL WELL AND GOOD, BUT WHY MAILORDER?

Mailorders fucking rock is why. How else is a kid in North Dakota going to receive the information and ideas he needs to thrive as a creative person? Mailorder—which provides access to the coolest in edge culture—can make backwoods Kentucky as rad a place to grow up or live as Hipsterville USA. Maybe then many of us may drop our obsession with urban congestion for economic/cultural reasons, thus saving our cities.

Plus, running a mailorder company affords you all kinds of flexibilities that other business don't. You get to work from home or a coffee shop or wherever. You set your own hours by how successful you are: Make tons of orders, work hard; make no orders, big deal, take a day off! Or you can travel with a band, selling stuff at shows while your partner handles the PO Box! It's fun we're talkin' here, not work!

Finally, with the widening support for the Internet, cheap phone and fax access and really cheap printing, it's gotten cheaper and cheaper to set something up and get the word out. Hell, I'll host your site for free beginning next year (get in touch if you're interested: srini@unamerican.com), so what's stopping you?

There are negative aspects to starting a mailorder—for instance, it's a lot of fucking work, you never meet the customers, etc. But there are two good things about starting a mailorder: it's not even close as much work as opening and running a retail business, where you've gotta sit in the fucking store all day, and you don't have very much to lose. My company, Unamerican Activities, was started on \$40, I swear. It's now our way of life.

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

Before we get down to the nitty gritty (and there's a whole lotta nitty gritty to get down to), we need a restructured definition. Mailorder simply denotes that you're dealing mostly with individuals as opposed to other businesses, and that the money you receive as payment for goods is sent to you directly. This method could be mail, but as your business gets more sophisticated you're going to want to implement things like credit-card ordering, a 1-800 number, and/or arrangements for international payment.

Just as we need to understand that mailorder doesn't necessarily mean things ordered through the mail, we have to understand that *punk* mailorder doesn't necessarily sell records. Why sell more 7"s or 'zines—why not go into the vibrator business? Or how about a seed company? Or sell organizers—how can a radical organize without a radical organizer? If you're really a punk, anything is possible and you can choose your own adventure.

I am of the opinion that you can take your pick of the world of products and services, make a "punk" version that's lower in cost and higher in quality, and you'll do just fine! For instance, if fashion magazines are so damn popular, why haven't I seen a 'zine on "punk fashion"? Not a glossy, but, you know, a 'zine. Or take soda. Isn't "punk soda" conceivable? I mean, there is nothing inherently evil or exploitative about carbonated water and if natural flavors are added, wouldn't this be a beverage that ought to bite off a chunk of Coke's monopoly? Hell, I'd buy it!

Don't fear the dilution of the word "punk." I know you're thinking "punk soda? what the fuck?", but seriously, if people like to drink soda, why not have it be healthy and rockin' instead of lame and corporate? If the word punk can survive the Offspring, it can survive anything.

With all that said, most of you will be inclined to sell records, 'zines, or some other common punk item. Awesome! Just fucking do it! It ain't my gig to *discourage* you, my friend!

LAUNCH SEQUENCE INITIATED

One of the best things about starting a mailorder is that you don't have to quit your existing job in order to start. Mailorder is

your classic "spare-time" activity, as long as you can find the time to visit your PO box during postal working hours.

My first tip to you is to do some legwork. Find out about things like shipping options, about how to sign up for a PO Box (and whether or not there's a wait for one). Find out if there are any existing mailorder operations in your area and visit or even volunteer there to get a feel for how it's done. Call up magazines that you like and ask for ad rates and schedules.

Most of all, however, the first thing you need to do is try and get into the brain of the customer you envision. You're probably wondering right now what you would sell. Hold up a minute. Rather than thinking in terms of the *product* first, why don't you consider your *customer* first? In other words, visualize the kind of person to whom you want to sell, and find out what they would be happy to buy from you. Think about your community, and try to figure out what's really missing from that community. Great mailorders deliver products that are unavailable locally and, obviously, rad to specific people.

I hate to use this word—it sounds so capitalistic—but you really need to have a *target market* in order to plan your onslaught. We're all unique individuals, but we form communities based on characteristics and goals we have in common. When people have desires in common and are willing to pay to address these desires, this is the birth of a *market*. One thing to remember during all of this—and it seems like a totally duh thing to even mention, but I'm gonna do it anyway—NEVER SELL SOMETHING THAT NOBODY WILL BUY.

BABY STEPS

Beginning a business is a process, rather than an event. Lookout! Records and Kill Rock Stars did not spring fully-formed from the brow of Athena—they started out tiny and grew and grew and grew. No one article can teach you all the tips and tricks that you will need in order to get your project successful. A lot of the companies that succeed and grow have an interesting combination of pluck, savvy, timeliness and capital which fueled their growth.

In mailorder, your basic tools include: some money with which to buy or make some inventory (we're gonna get to

the money issue in just a bit, so don't run out and sell the farm yet); some space with which to store the inventory and send stuff out; a reasonable level of organization, so that you don't lose orders or money; as time goes on, a mailing list of current or prospective customers; enough design sense to put together a smart catalog, some ads and perhaps a web page; and finally some place to collect your mail—usually a post office box.

You do not need a computer for any of this, but if you have one it can make your life a hell of a lot easier. Some programs you might find of use include: FileMaker Pro, for managing your customer and mailing lists; QuickBooks Pro for accounting; and common graphic applications like Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop to design ads, catalogs, and web pages. You didn't hear it here, but you can probably score this software without paying for it—ask around, punk, the resources will find you. However, do keep in mind that people's work is coded into those programs and once you've got the dosh to pay for 'em, you really should.

You also do not need a "seller's permit" or any legal documentation for your business until you feel ready to go above ground. However, there are advantages to "going legal." Unamerican went legal specifically to accept credit cards over the Web and to be able to accept checks made out to "Unamerican," as opposed to our normal names. We operated as a "hobby" for years before we took the plunge, however.

The hardest part of starting a business is figuring out what you want to do and how to get paid for it, not filing forms and complying with taxes. Figure out the first goal before fretting over the second. If you do want to go the legal route, contact your local Small Business Association (they're in the Government Pages of your phone book), take some classes and follow their guidelines.

TO MARKET, TO MARKET

So you've got your product, you've got the PO Box, you've got the boxes and the tape and all that shit. People now need to know that you exist! In business circles, this "hey I'm here" action is called marketing. Some types of marketing

(there are hundreds!) are advertising, public relations, direct mail, sales, and networking. Yes, all of these tools are used by the bad guys too. But that doesn't make the tools themselves "bad."

My advice on marketing is pretty simple. You should focus on envisioning the moment where an interested customer holds your actual catalog in her/his hot little hands (or sees it on a screen). Understand this moment. This is the moment where you're on stage and it's the moment you're most likely to sell something to someone who genuinely wants it. All of your marketing energy should go into creating this moment.

You can print as cheap a catalog as you want at the beginning. If you've got interesting stuff and add some interesting ideas, a Sharpie and Xerox combo can kick the ass of any glossy six-color hundred-page J. Crew catalog. You can also make rad black-and-white designs with a computer or art supplies. Remember to make your catalog ooze personality because, fuck, that's what the capitalist bastards are missing, right?

Again, keep your starting print costs as low as possible until you honestly feel you're going to make your money back! You never can have enough printing hookups—whether it's a friend at a Kinko's or figuring out where the rave promoters print their cheap color flyers, finding out ways to cut corners on printing is always helpful. Make a LOT of catalogs and get them to people who are likely to be interested (don't waste anyone's time). You can leave stacks of catalogs at local hipster hangouts, you can get your friends' mailorder to send them out for you, you can send them on tour with a band, or you can advertise their availability and send them to people by mail. When your list of interested people is large enough, you can also get a "direct mail permit" from your local post office and save on postage. I've found this to be a pain in the ass, but you can save a lot of money.

This is a good time to remind you to remember to have fun! This stuff may sound tedious, but a little planning today will save you a lot of worrying as your business grows. I have personally done that worrying. It sucks. Do it right the first time.

Think of your business as a living being. Living beings need room to grow, food to eat, and ideally, a higher purpose. The ideal business gives back to its environment, improves its community and helps it grow. I think that if you're going to be engaging in sales and marketing activities within your subculture, you owe that subculture your commitment to helping it whenever possible. This can be done through sponsorship, through helping put on shows, through all kinds of things. And let's face it: Unselfishly helping people out is the best marketing there is.

HOW TO PULL A BUSINESS OUT OF YOUR ASS. IF YOUR ASS CONTAINS A C-NOTE, THAT IS

This brings us to resources, which basically means money. Money is like cooking oil—if you don't have any, you will scorch the dish, but if you have too much, you wind up with something yucky and bad for you to boot. Even if your resources are unlimited, it is healthy to begin your business a little hungry. That way you really learn the ins-and-outs of dynamic resource-driven problem solving, instead of just throwing money at your problems like the big boys do.

Let's say your budget is \$100. You have to be able to make that \$100 cover your product, your marketing (remember those printing hookups we talked about? Give 'em a phone call right about now), maybe get a PO Box and take out an ad or two. That's a lot to do with not a lot of cash, eh? Before you jump in cash-wise, you need to plan ahead. Here are ways to stretch that dollar farther:

- **BUDGET COMES FIRST.** First and most importantly, you need to honestly ask yourself if you can find a product and create an inventory with the cash you've got? If you can't, you've got to choose a new product, or figure out a way that you can afford it. You can burn through \$100 really fast if you choose to resell already-finished goods, but if you can make the product yourself, you just might have a business. \$100 may not buy many necklaces, but it can buy a whole ton of beads, you know?

- **AN AWESOME NAME GOES A LONG WAY.** Choose wisely. I can't emphasize this strongly enough. The right name makes word of mouth fun, and word of mouth happens to be both the best and the *cheapest* form of marketing.

- **FIND THE HOOKUPS.** Brainstorm resources that don't need money—it'll make you feel better about your situation. For instance, do you think you could scare up a free copy connection? Can you put a homepage up on the Web (for free web space, try going to <http://www.tripod.com> or <http://www.geocities.com>)? Do you have special skills or training (like screen printing or making lemonade), or even a burning interest in *acquiring* such skills or training? Does your job let you get away with spending time on your business?

- **INFORMATION IS FREE.** Go to the library, surf the Web, contact your local Small Business Association, go to the post office and get in tune with your target market as well as you can by talking your idea up to friends and family. You should also *write* about your ideas, because you will need the words to describe your products when you start making catalogs and sales calls. Keep a journal handy at all times.

- **PRICE YOUR PRODUCT WELL.** In a nutshell, if you charge too much, nobody will buy, and if you charge too little, you may find yourself losing money. It may seem stupid to point this out, but you wouldn't believe how many people—especially here in the punk scene—don't understand that losing money IS A BAD THING. You need to make sure your prices cover your product, your time and your postage and packaging. There is the variable of worrying about what the market thinks about your prices. Consider this as a factor in your pricing, but don't lose sleep over it—just commit to providing your customers with far more value than the money they've sent you.

- **KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED.** There are always markets for your goods that don't require much money to address. Would your friends buy what you have decided to sell? If so,

walk up to them and sell away—and ask them to tell their friends. Is there a venue where you can sell or market your goods without paying for space? Gilman Street, a non-profit punk joint in Berkeley, lets people set up and sell for the cost of admission to the show. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that punks show up at punk shows and pay punk money for punk goods. Are there stores that you know of that would be natural outlets for your goods? Hook up with these stores. Try to track down the person who actually buys the inventory for the store and get them to give your product a chance. Ideally, you can find a store that will pay cash up front for a small amount of inventory but many larger stores choose to pay you NET 30 or NET 60 (which means you have to wait 30 or 60 days for payment). Consignment, or getting paid for your product upon its sale, is also an option.

- **DO LIKE THE APES.** You've probably heard of the term "guerrilla marketing." This basically means marketing with a minimal budget, and it works wonders. Make some flyers or stickers (there's that copy connection thing again) or buy some spraypaint or sidewalk chalk—do whatever you need to do to get your name out there. I highly recommend going to the library and checking out the book *Guerrilla Marketing* by Jay Conrad Levinson. He's got tips on everything from handing out flyers on the street to purchasing a billboard.

- **TAKE YOUR TIME.** You don't even need inventory in order to *plan* the business. Maybe you'll need a year in order to get the resources together, but if you've got the *dream* together, it will happen, and you'll have thought out your idea for a whole year, which greatly increases your odds. The best part is that even after four years, this is *STILL* my favorite part of running my business—visualization, strategy, and dreaming.

Try to save money wherever possible. This usually means starting out small and growing. Organic is good. You may have to start locally to save on advertising costs, shipping costs or even just to cut down on the phone bill.

That's OK. Once you've got some steady income coming from local spots, you may have enough to take out an ad in, say, your favorite national punkzine. Remember: Giant trees grow from the smallest seed. You just have to plant the fucking seed.

HOW TO DEAL WITH SHITWORK... ER, I MEAN FULFILLMENT

Eventually, you will find yourself staring at your first order or, hopefully, even a stack of orders. Your marketing and sales activities are but one half of the equation. Order fulfillment, customer service and accounting are vital. You have to realize that your customer is your employer and if you piss her or him off, they can fire you.

One important fact is that it takes 10 times the amount of resources to make a sale from a new customer as it does from reselling to an existing customer. Very few people make a lot, or any, money on one product unless that product is one that is used up and people continue to reorder. Profits come from making a customer happy with their first purchase from you, then they buy a second time and so on. The second time they buy is most important. In essence they are saying, "We approve of the way you do business, we are satisfied with your product or service, and we are ready to develop a purchasing relationship with you."

Fulfillment in its most basic sense consists of collecting payment and order information, matching order with inventory, recording order information, and shipping the order out. You can screw things up at every step so let's go over each one, so you can plan your entry into the marketplace in the most bulletproof way possible.

As far as collecting payment goes, many mailorder companies choose to do business out of a PO Box or private mailbox company. I chose to do so because I don't want to give out my home address and because it sounds professional to say, "Send check or money order to PO Box blah blah blah." PO Boxes come in many sizes; I recommend you don't rent the smallest box possible because the less you have to receive those sticky notices that say "your mailbox is full" the better. However, if you feel comfortable using

your home address, by all means do. It is, after all, one less trip to make each day/week and one less expense every year.

It's a good idea to look at the ordering information from other catalogs or ads. What do they charge for shipping? How long do they take to send an order out? If they're a punk business, odds are they handle these services by themselves—as a result, you should endeavor to match or beat their handling of items.

Bear in mind that when someone sends a check or cash to your tiny mailorder company, they're taking a leap of faith that you actually exist and that you will send the order out right away. This leap of faith should be rewarded with fast service and a rad product at a cheap price. If any of these factors fall through, it winds up souring the customer not only on your company but on mailorder in general. If you make your customer wait forever or disappoint them with your product, you'll lose their trust and everyone loses. Don't slack!

It doesn't cost anything to have a well-organized inventory and accounting system. Depending on what it is you're selling, you will need to have a clear workspace to handle boxing, addressing, etc... and space for storage (and perhaps some shelves to organize this space). Every company I've studied uses a different system for making sure orders go out in a timely fashion and that inventory is reordered as soon as it's required.

The less inventory you have sitting on your shelves, the better, especially in the early months of a mailorder business. Inventory exists so that you can ship it, not so that it can sit there. Common sense dictates that you should know what's selling well in your product line and what isn't so that you can stock up on the popular items in advance of demand. The faster you turn over your inventory, the less money you will have tied up.

The plain truth is that there is no easy answer to the problem of keeping inventory. Inventory is easiest in a predictable marketplace, and there is no such thing—especially in punk! It's important to not get lured into deep discounts for large-quantity purchases that you don't need

immediately. Instead, focus on keeping an adequately stocked inventory and maintaining as much of your cash as possible.

It is VERY important to keep track of who you've sold to because you want them to buy again at some point. Also, if you send people extra catalogs and stickers and other kinds of brand-awareness freebies, you will enhance their power of word-of-mouth a great deal. We keep our database of customers and inquiries in a program called FileMaker Pro, which is really easy to use.

As for accounting, this gets much more important when your business becomes a legal entity but it still something that even the most part-time of "hobby" businesses could benefit from. A computer program called QuickBooks Pro is highly recommended by most small businesses to whom I've spoken. But remember, people did accounting long before computers existed, it just takes a little more work. Accounting allows you to view your business from a profit/loss standpoint, which really rocks because then you can find out what expenses you can cut and how well you're really doing.

AS ONE STAND TOGETHER?

Look around your life and take an honest inventory of your skills and resources. Since you're a human being, you will notice huge gaps in this picture. At some point, you may be interested in working with other people to help fill those gaps.

It is the way of capitalism to "employ" people, thereby elevating some people to "boss" status and relegating others to "employee" status. As an anarchist, I find this distasteful—not *wrong*, per se, but in violation of anarchist common sense (yes there is such a thing). The society that tolerates the least hierarchy and coercion is most likely to make people happy and function efficiently. As such, I believe in communal ownership of shared means of production. Some would call this a "co-op," but it's equivalent to "partnership."

I am not saying that every member of your partnership command an equal share of the project. I am saying that

one should pro-rate one's ownership percentage to the amount of time one has worked on the project, the amount of capital resources brought into the project and the value of crucial abilities to the project. Be fair, folks and talk it out ahead of time. Equitable negotiation dissolves future bullshit.

People become partners for many different reasons. In my case, I found that while I've got a lot of really crazy ideas, I was disorganized like a Wesley Willis nightmare. In your case, you may have a tight-knit group of friends with whom you want to work, or you have a boyfriend/girlfriend who shows some kind of aptitude that you don't. Take some time to get to know people in your community, find some heads that you trust, make friends at shows or wherever and ask around a little to see if they've screwed anyone over. I believe people are fundamentally good, but they may not be good to you, you know?

Before you take on a partner, agree on two things: the division of labor and the division of creativity. The first is common sense—different people have different abilities, and a good micro-society figures out ways to reward these talents. The second is a good idea because sometimes people feel unrepresented in a consensus. If it's obvious that one person's ideas are going to dominate, make arrangements for the regular expression of the others' ideas.

EVOLUTION'S GOTTA COME, RIGHT?

People in the punk and radical scene are fond of saying "unity" this and "unity" that, but there is no more intensely

united effort than a business partnership. When people of different races and ages and whatever get together and form businesses, there is the potential for true equality and justice. I want this potential to be made manifest within your endeavors.

The important idea here is something I'm calling *unity management*, in an effort to impress my parents that I'm saying something important. "Unity" implies that different people have achieved a common goal and work together to make that goal come to pass.

Unite with your partners once you've determined that you can trust them. Understand that everything they do is in the interest of the communal goal—the success of the business. If someone isn't pulling their weight, advise them to start pulling and only fire in the direst of circumstances. Forget the threatening bullshit practiced in the current system—persuade them to either be passionate about the group goal or persuade them to leave.

This kind of unity—this nearly spiritual bond between different people pulling for a common interest—IS THE REVOLUTION. It is the combination of love and productivity into history itself. Great bands appear to be joined together by an indescribable force—run your company like a great band.

James and I trust each other totally. We play slightly different roles, but those roles are changing, and each of us knows that the other will not disappoint. That's how

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF PUNK MAILORDER

It is important to remember that there is a moral dimension to punk mailorder. I believe that following this moral path will lead to a healthier, better business in the long run. After all, moral behavior adds up to happier customers and partners, which in turn leads to a stronger business.

1. Thou shalt choose a product that fucking rocks and aim to sell to people who fucking rock. Choose one that isn't

too expensive for you and keep a solid inventory of this item so that you're rarely out of stock.

2. Thou shalt not mark up the price of the product too damn high. Keep prices reasonable. This is common punk rock sense—being a profiteer AIN'T COOL.

3. Thou shalt treat thy customers, suppliers and even competitors with grace,

fairness and understanding. We are all punks here. We are all living outside of the system and we must work together to topple it, right?

4. Thou shalt kick corporate ass whenever possible. Charge as little as you can, market as unobnoxiously as possible and make things that rock. If you can sell a better, cheaper, punker shoe, you're really selling a big ol' FUCK YOU to Nike.

we've managed to disseminate so much radical propaganda on zero fucking budget for so long, with only two people. We were able to create this situation because we're really good friends, plus we're *both* fucked if the other starts screwing up.

I totally believe that organizations that embrace unity have huge survival advantages over normal hierarchical companies. Nobody likes being bossed—why not eliminate the bosses? When an organization works correctly, it resembles a human body. Different organs perform different tasks but together they make up a potential. This organizational "person," to me, is the next step in human evolution. Small teams are responsible for most of the technological innovations of our time—why not apply the same model to other aspects of our lives?

MORE DEEP THOUGHTS

All history is the story of ideas and inspiration. Ideas can be wrapped up in ornate blossoms of words but they can also take the form of a beautiful statue, a noble set of laws, a brave and historic act, a movement for political freedom or a great 7". As punks, we know what inspiration is. I'm 26 and spent years in the Bay Area. Inspiration for me was seeing Blake Jawbreaker and Jake Filth explain their respective souls onstage within minutes of each other. You have certainly had your moments as well.

If you want to stay on history's good side, MAKE

SOME HISTORY OF YOUR OWN. Create an object that you think should exist. Why isn't there a punk board game? What about punk breath mints or plumber services? What I'm saying is that *anything* is possible, and *anything*—even barely scraping—beats the doom of working for The Man for the rest of your life. That is what the system wants from you—they want another wage-slave. Just say no to that brand of idiocy and understand that hoeing your own row isn't the same as a vow of poverty—not by a long shot!

It's important to remember that running a small business is not just an adventure, it's a job. You need to be able to pay for your food, clothing, and shelter through all this. That may take the form of a day job in the beginning, but real revolution starts when you live your dreams full-time. In order to cover all these costs, you've got to build a good amount of "profit" into your price structure.

Remember that it's not really "profit" if it's going to you as compensation for your time and effort—more like "wages." Sweat the small stuff, when you get the time to do so. Remember that packaging and supplies cost real money. You can scam boxes and tape for a while, but eventually you're going to have to go aboveground.

To me, revolution is a thousand kids burying their parents' way of life and reinventing themselves as wonderkids—as total people who are in charge of their own lives. Be one of those kids. ©

5. Thou shalt not discriminate between "punks" and cool people who aren't punk. Discrimination is the way of the fucking ENEMY—the system. Not all punks look like you, so drop the elitist attitude and get off on the cross-pollination of ideas between scenes. Just be pure, create pure things, and all will work out.

6. Thou shalt expand the audience for Do-It-Yourselfing and punk rock through inspiring people to start their own businesses. This means finding new customers—

through advertising, promotion, sponsorship and direct mail. But be sure to distinguish yourself from capitalists who use similar tools by being nice, interesting and non-intrusive about your marketing activities.

7. Thou shalt have the best interests of punks (and other humans) at heart as you conduct business. This will pay off in time as your nice-person reputation spreads.

8. Thou shalt dig that these commandments—and this entire piece—are *just*

advice and that punk first and foremost means following your bliss above all.

9. Thou shalt not become a capitalist. Never, ever put dollars before dreams. Never eat your soul to fill your belly.

10. Thou shalt try and try until ye succeed. Humanity depends on ye, thou intrepid paragon of Punk Free Enterprise, and though ye may struggle much in thine time of doubt and pre-growth, persist and ye shall prevail.

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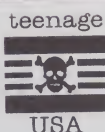
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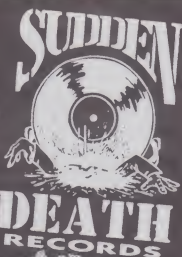
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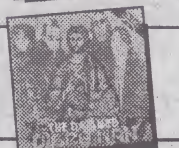
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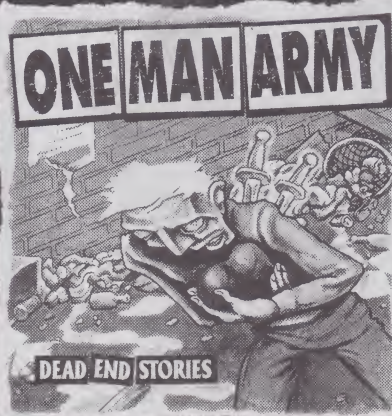
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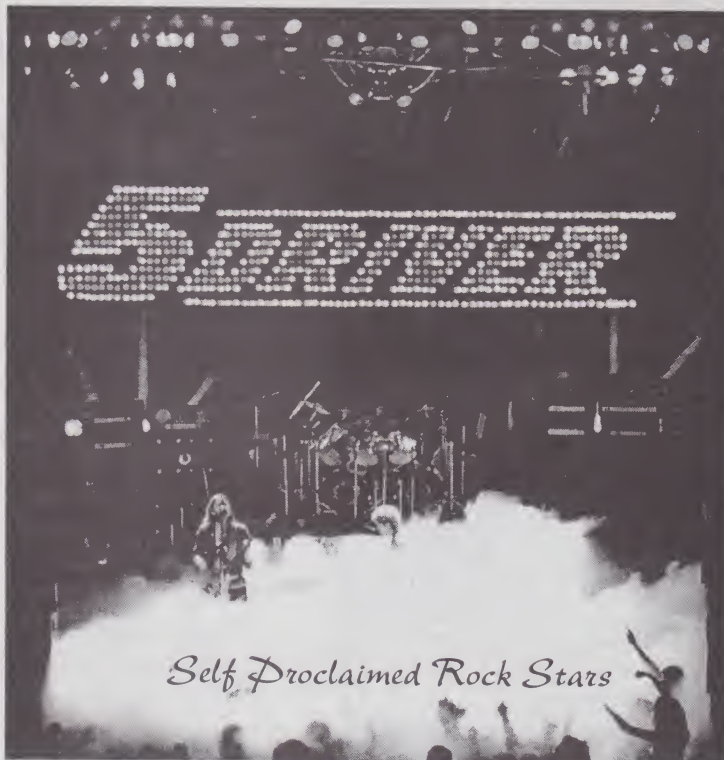
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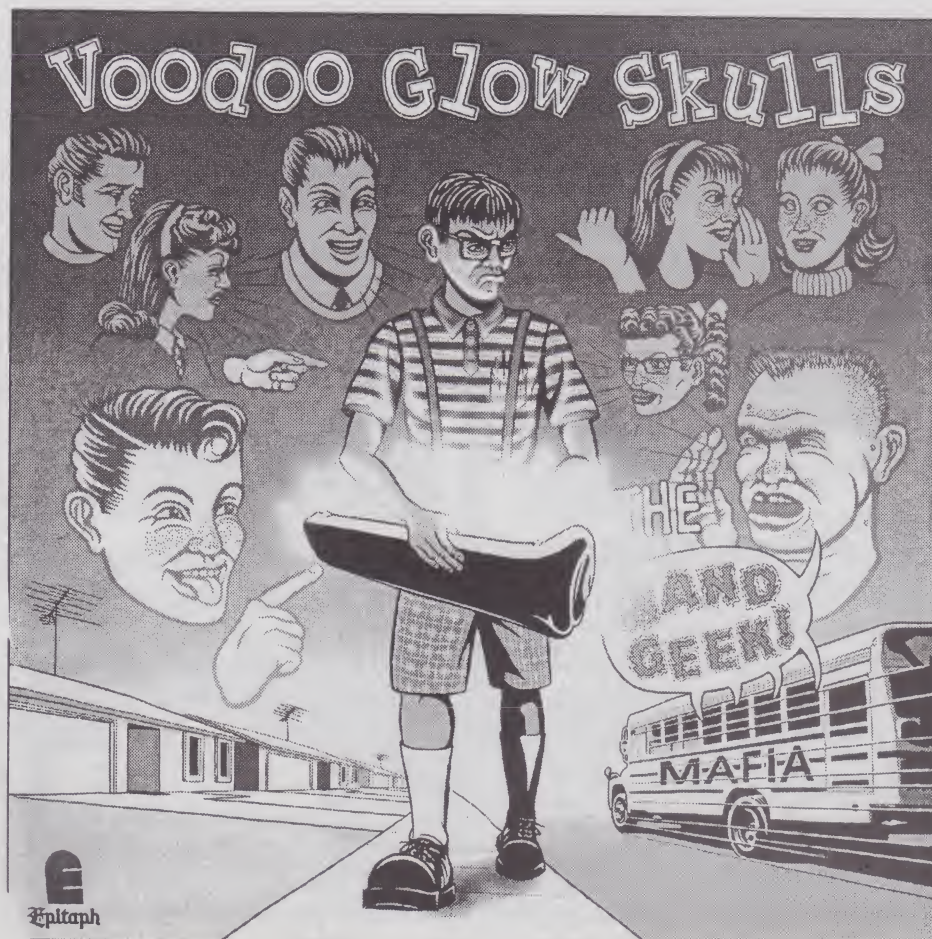
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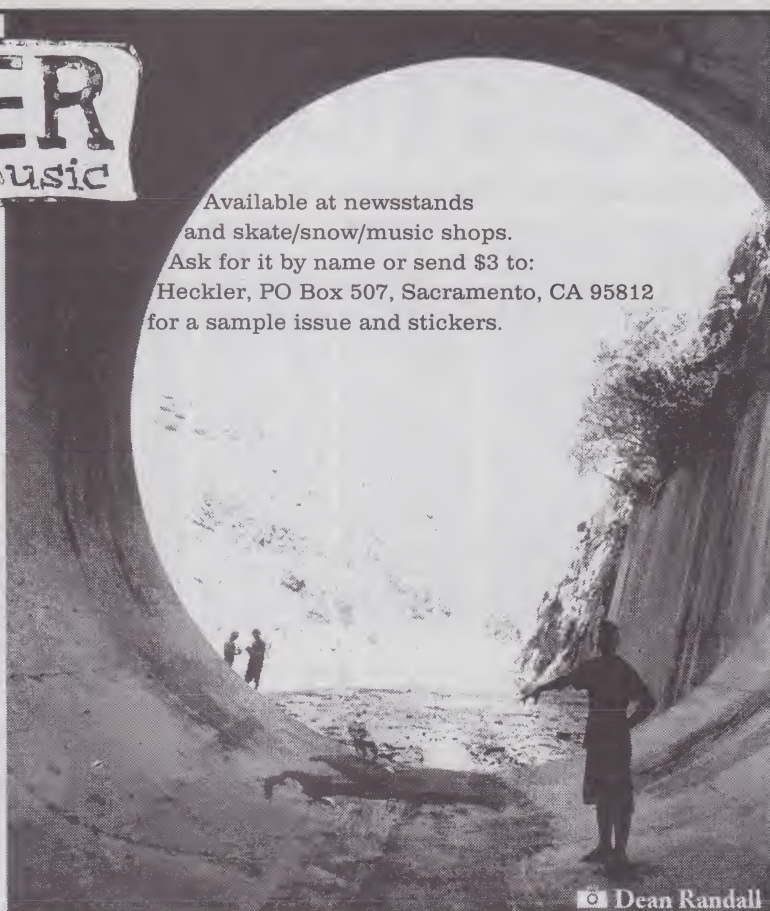
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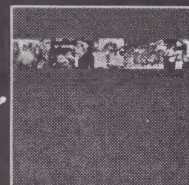


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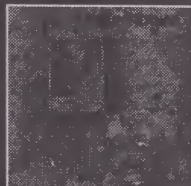
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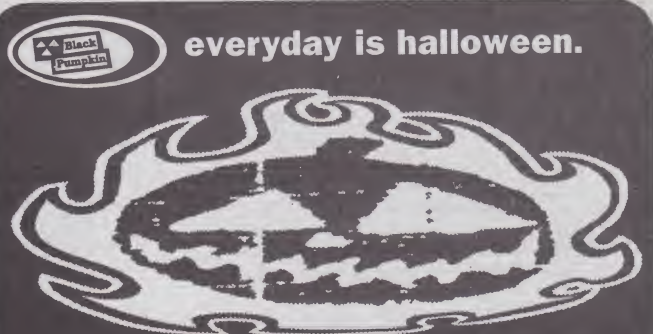
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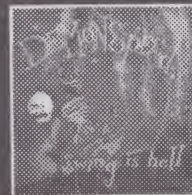
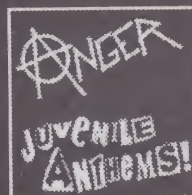
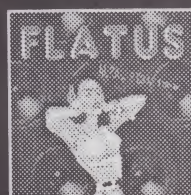


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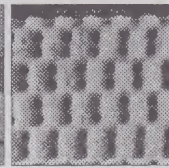
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NUMERICAL

5 Driver – Self Proclaimed Rock Stars, CD

Fairly mediocre melodic punk that seems to be modeled after late Jawbreaker (but faster.) Or maybe Cringer. Not great, but listenable. Still, there are many, many bands that do this stuff better than 5 Driver.

Negative Progression records PO Box 15507 Boston, MA 02215

45 Spiders - standard forms of communication, CD

Pretty good dreamy indie rock/pop stuff. The vocals get annoying at times, but I would definitely consider listening to this more than once. (MD)

Deep reverb, PO box 32247, Washington, dc 20007

THE LETTER A

A.C. – Picnic of Love, CD

A.C. is otherwise known as Anal Cunt and if there is one A.C. album to ignore, it would be this one. Head Fascist Seth Putnam can obviously not keep a lineup together and this record was made acoustic only because he couldn't find a drummer to work with. Yes, it is awful. All acoustic songs written in a generic "love" sense. I think it is supposed to be funny. It's not. (SY)

Off The Records, PO BOX 612213, N. Miami FL 33261

Acacia - Untune the Sky, CD

Heavily metal influenced screaming hardcore. Vocals remind me somewhat of the singer from Acid. This was good but nothing too exciting. Sounded pretty much like a lot of bands coming out these days with that metal hardcore chug-a-chugga sound screaming like no tomorrow. (DV)

Goodfellow Records 762 Upper James Street, Suite 275 Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L9c 3a2

Adam West / Mazinga – Split, 7"

A pretty good combination of two bands on this platter. The Adam West side showcases their straight-ahead punk rock styling. The recording is a live one taken from a show at CBGBs. I don't mind this live recording, but there is nothing cool about CBGBs anymore. Mazinga plays punk rock with sing along choruses. The production is heavily over glossed, but the songs are great. I would be interested in hearing them recorded with a rawer sound.

What really makes this record awesome is the artwork of Big Tony O'Farrell. With the cover and his comic inserts, it's some of the best and entertaining stuff I have seen in awhile. (SY)
Reanimator Records/ Fandango, PO BOX 1582, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Affluente - Moltitudine Suina, 7"

I was somewhat lead to believe by a friend that this was full-on raging old Italian HC but boy was he wrong. It's pretty run-of-the-mill hardcore with really strained dull vocals by someone who has little or no capacity to utilize his voice either singing or shouting for a band, at times sounding like Mike Muir from Suicidal Tendencies. The lyrics in general seem pretty decent of the hate filled, anti-patriotic, and angry variety but I have to say 2 songs struck me in very negative ways. In one song, the chorus is "Forza Italia - Sieg Heil" with emphasis (shouted backup vocals) on the "sieg heil". It's done in an ironic way but anybody that doesn't understand Italian (there are no English translations) might not understand that it's a criticism of the Italian government and I would never even consider playing this song where someone else might hear it. The song "Missione di Piacere" (Pleasure Mission) is so conservative in its view on sex that it actually pisses me off. I got a really weird feeling from this record that rubbed me entirely the wrong way. (KB)

Applequince via di Mezzo, 12 01100 Viterbo Italy

Agnostic Front - Something's Gotta Give, CD

God, I can remember being 12 years old and hanging out with my cousin when I first heard the name Agnostic Front. At this point, Live At CBGB had recently come out and the introduction to this formative NYHC outfit was much appreciated. This band, whether you like it or not, influenced many of us in our beginnings into punk and hardcore. So, has Agnostic Front's reunion soured our once fond memories of this influential band? The formula is pretty much in the same vein as the earlier material, with the exception of being less metal and; dare I say, more punk. Could this be why they are now on Epitaph? The lyrics have taken a step back and are tackling more simplistic hardcore themes such as friendship and the like. The version of "Crucified" on this release pales in comparison to the original recording and the new version of "The Blame" flat out sucks. The only

test left is can they resurrect the energy of old into a live setting? If this album is the answer to that question, my guess would be no. (BR)
Epitaph

The Alkaline Trio – For Your Lungs Only, CD EP

These guys are great live and this EP is no disappointment. I have to say that the songwriting is Boston power pop reminiscent of the good stuff in the early 80's. Not silly, but straight forward catchiness and sometimes a tad noisy. If it's a selling point, the Alkaline Trio features members of Tuesday and 88 Fingers Louie. In reality, it should be this band that sells the others. (SY)

Asian Man Records, PO BOX 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030

Anonymous - Easily Unamused, CD

Classify this under unclassifiable, describe it as eclectic, and consider it good. Anonymous play some distraught hardcore with heavy rock influences and things you wouldn't expect to hear — like a blues sounding ending to one song. The music ranges from really speedy to slow and brooding. The vocals are mostly of the yell/growl variety, and work well with what's going on. The band almost completely avoids melody. Good stuff. (SM)

Doubler Decker Records, 803 St. John St., Allentown, PA 18103

Anti-Heroes - American Pie, CD

Oh great, a right-wing OI! band. Tough guy street punk with a song about Bill Clinton that could've been written by Rush Limbaugh if he was in a punk band. "He's a taxraiser, promise breaker, adulterer! He's a draftdodger, liberal dictartor, potsmoker!" goes the chorus. Another line: "Wants a gay man up the Army's anus!" Other songs about being raised with traditional hardworking values and about how Jerry Garcia is a piece of shit. Weirdest thing: Four ads for Atlanta businesses inside the CD packaging. Blech. (SM)

Taang! 706 Pismo Ct., San Diego, CA 92109

Apeface – S/T, 12"

Awesome packaging and a chaotic sound, Apeface kick out a great record. Utilizing some metal tendencies and gasoline vocal stylings, the songs are perfect models of modern-day hardcore. Lyrically, Apeface call to all the fucked up things in the world society and culture. Can I find any flaws with this record? No. (SY)

Hopscotch, PO Box 55783, Valencia, CA 91385

REVIEWS

(MH), KIM BAE (KB), MARIE DAVENPORT (MD), NATE WILSON (NW), PATTI KIM (PK), SCOTT MACDONALD (SM), SCOTT YAHTZEE (SY), THE OLD MAN (TOM), ED FAKTOROVICH (EF)

The Aquamen - Do the Alkeeholl, CD

Nice garage type surf with some straight Rock n roll thrown in for good measure. While I liked all the surf stuff on here, I could do with less of the drunk, Jon Spencer wannabe rock songs. I really liked their surf version of the Godfather theme. Pretty good stuff. (JK)
205 Bartlett, San Francisco, CA 94110

As Darkness Falls, 7"

In their own words: "part metal, part hard-core, All evil." (MD)
9 volt discs, PO box 169, Edison, NJ, 08818

Assholes - Revenge of the Kung-Fu Punks, 7"

Considering that all garage-punk sounds the same to me minus a few standouts like New Bomb Turks I don't really know what to say about this. It's garage. Very typical. But it's from Italy. It's not sloppy and it's well-produced. There's no insert which I'm assuming is because the band doesn't really have anything of interest to say. I don't know - if you like garage maybe you'll like this. (KB)
Valium c/o De Maggi via Capo Palinuro 35 00122 Ostia (RM) Italy or Krakatoa Eugenio Zona via Manzoni, 12 20090 Opera (MI) Italy

THE LETTER B

Bakunin's Children/No More - split 7"

Bakunin's Children are kind of crusty-sounding at times, at other times just simple angry hardcore. The production gives their songs an extremely raw sound adding to their no-nonsense political lyrics. Unfortunately I can't listen to the whole side because there's some weird paper dot embedded in the vinyl so I could only catch 3 songs. No More starts out sounding kind of crusty as well but have some quasi-melodic parts thrown in and some brief spoken parts (as did Bakunin's Children). They have certain creative twists to their music that make them stand out from the average hardcore band. The insert reprints the now famous "What's Wrong With McDonald's" pamphlet and has song explanations in addition to other tidbits of info. Good messages and music are to be found here - especially the No More stuff. (KB)
Skank Records c/o Steve Differding 102, rue du Parc L-3542 Dudelange Luxembourg

Battalion of Saints a.d. - Cuts..., CD

Unlike many of this publications readers, I never listened to this legend of British punk rock. I've never been a fan of this genre and after listening to this, I'd say it's a pretty safe

estimate that I never will be a fan. For those who might care, this still has that 80's circle pitting' punk rawk sound that made leather and spike clad bands such as this popular. So unless this is a re-issue of some sorts, spike up that hair and toss on the ole' leather jacket for a round of beer drinking and brawling with Battalion Of Saints. (BR)
Taang!, 706 Pismo Ct., San Diego, CA 92109

Bedford - Year One, EP

Like a faster, poppier Smoking Popes, Bedford plays sappy songs about girls. The vocals are like the guy from Smoking Popes, and maybe a little Morrissey, but faster, higher and slightly more nasal. Definitely pop punk. Four songs. Not bad. (SM)
System Untitled Records & Other Technologies, 55 Searle St., Pittston, PA 18640

Blonde Redhead - In an expression of the inexpressible, CD

I first heard about Blonde Redhead when I saw them with Fugazi this summer in Detroit. I remember thinking that they had a really cool sound but they quit after only a few songs and I soon forgot about them. Produced by Guy Picciotto, their new album re-affirms my earlier observation about their sound. They have one of the most original sounds I have heard from any band in a long time, simultaneously sounding like many bands you have heard before while sounding like something totally original. The female singer has a truly beautiful voice that wafts beauty over the sparse, almost mechanical background instrumental work. Blond redhead goes back and forth from screeching, wailing repetition to beautiful soaring melody with an ease not seen in many bands today. The band's sound is balanced nicely by Guy Picciotto's production, which blends rhythm and electronic flavor very smoothly into the bands vocals. The songwriting is well done, and much like Sonic Youth, they are able to be very experimental or very melodic at the drop of a hat. I like this band a lot. Highly recommended. (JK)
Touch & Go records, inc. PO box 25520 Chicago, IL 60625

Bloodhog - s/t, 7"

The cover art and font used reminds me of an Iron Maiden record so I immediately expected metal. Bingo. Judging by the hilarious name, I expected bad metal. Right again. Now, the problem lies in the fact that I can appreciate bad metal probably more than anyone I know but this is just bad all around. The guitar

sound is reminiscent of Hiras and the music has a definitive 80's thrash influence but the combination of poor structure and weak vocals make for; as I said, bad metal. (BR)
Spork!, 556 Prospect St., Seattle, WA 98109

The Bonaduces - "K" is For Catherine, CD

13 little stories told in the form of poppity-punkity-wop-bop-a-loo-bop songs. Harmonies sung in earnest with apparently some thought put into the lyrics. Cool. Not rilly my brand of Earl Grey, but this one made it on the CD player long enough for me to whip up some miso soup AND do the dishes! The girl on the cover has lovely eyebrows and a wonderfully unimpressed look. (PK)
Endearing, PO Box 69009, 2025 Corydon Ave., Winnipeg MB, R3P 2G9 Canada
<http://www.mbnet.mb.ca/~endear>

Booby Hatch - Hip Shaking Asscore, 7"

Total DIY crusty HC type band, pretty well executed too. Every town has one of these bands, and almost all of them release something - but unlike most of them, these guys waited until they were actually ready to record to make their record. Entirely enjoyable. (GG).

Bottledog - Flinkpad / The Mustard Stain, 7"

Interesting progressive art rock that sorta reminds me of times of Tortoise or Stereolab. Repetitive rhythms, dadaist vocals, and quirky stops and starts make this a winner. (MH)
SKAM, PO Box 651, Iowa City IA 52244

Brandon Cruz - Eddie is a Punk, CD

This is a one of a kind story and the way this was done is perfect. Brandon Cruz played "Eddie" in the 1960's TV show "The Courtship of Eddie's father". Many already knew that he was in the popular Dr. Know, but you get more than that. A nice booklet that tells the whole story and music from Brandon's bands: Harmful if Swallowed, Twisted Naked, the Bradon Cruz band, the Ugly Truth and the best racks are Brandon on the original 1968 TV show singing. Most of all the songs, you won't be able to find, minus the Dr. Know covers that may even be better on this disc. Even an appearance by Mickey Dolenz is found on this disc. (EA)

Taang! Records, 706 Pismo Ct., San Diego CA 92109

Bride Just Died - We Are the Hungry, 7"

"Punk as Fuck," English style. (MD)
Neat Damned Noise, PO box 131471, the woodlands, Texas, 77393-1471

The Business, The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth, CD

The Business play loud, chanting drunk English skinhead type hardcore/punk that really makes you want to unify against the powers that be. Unfortunately, the band's loud dirty angry sound doesn't fit well with the slick production of this CD, and at times the band sounds almost cheesy. The business are a good band, and it's too bad that this album makes them sound so lame. There are some real good songs on here that aren't ruined by the production, so, if you like the business, this is still worth checking out. (JK)

Tang records, 706 Pismo ct San Diego, CA 92109

THE LETTER C**Cable - Gutter Queen, CD**

This Cable album starts out with this heavy acoustic guitar part which I hated at first but it eventually drew me into the entire album. The music is loud and polished hardcore. Sometimes there is more of a rock feel on this record, but that is also the case on all the best Black Sabbath records. Yes, they do an awesome cover of Planet Caravan that emulates the mood of the original. The samples on this album are also really good and relevant to the mood of the album. Gutter Queen is weird upon your first listen, but when you get into it, you really get into it. (SY)

Hydra Head PO BOX 990248, Boston, MA 02199

Choke - needless to say, CD

Choke provides melodic, anthematic music for the super hardcore skateboarder. You know, the ones with the extra piercings and super fat chains. (MD)

Smallman Records, PO box 352 RPO Corydon Ave, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3M 3V3

Civic/ Park, Split 7"

Civic from Urbana/ Champaign, IL and the other from Springfield, IL. Civic = indie/college rock. Park = mix of big emo bands today. (DV)

Starry Night Records PO Box 9592 Springfield, IL 62791

Cletus - More Songs About Other People's Girlfriends, 7"

This is another wacky 'n' goofy pop-punk slab of vinyl. Fast and melodic, with the quintessential "wuh-ohhh"s. Songs about ugly chicks, emo dicks, and other such annoyances. Plus some silly song that apparently created a minor brew-haha. Hah. Oh well. (PK)

Mutant Pop, 5010 NW Shasta, Corvallis OR, 97333

Consumed - Breakfast at Pappa's, CD

Melodic thick pop punk rock. This kinda reminds me of the good stuff by All. Nice heavy guitars with melodic breaks that don't end up in wanky guitar solos, and very solid bass and drums. Only six songs here, though, so this is pretty short. I'm looking forward to a full-length. (MH)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco CA 94110

Compound Red - Always A Pleasure, CD

As much as I love the Desoto Record label, I can't think of one good thing to say about this album. My first complaint is over-production. I've heard Radiohead albums that sound rougher. I actually liked the earlier Compound Red 7" and I know what they are supposed to sound like. They are poppy and their riffs are good, throwing in the dropped D tuning for sonic effects. Their tour with the Promise Ring probably gave them more of an emo influence. Have you ever noticed that when Jay Robbins records a band that he has a tendency to make them sound like Jawbox? I won't mention the other bands, but I don't think it's a fluke. This album is ready for college radio. (SY)

DeSoto Records, PO BOX 60335, Washington DC 20039

Corduroy - Dead End Memory Lane, CD

This CD is a collection of all previously released material from Corduroy. 22 tracks done by a trio from San Francisco on Broken Rekids + 1 Minutemen Cover if this says anything about the band. Pretty good rock music. (DV)

Broken Rekids PO Box 460402 San Francisco, CA 94146-0402

Cracked Cop Skulls - Why Pussyfoot When You Can Kill?, 7"

Unfortunately the promise put forth by the awesome title of this 7" doesn't follow through. Kind of repetitive guitar heavy HC with the same tempo in every song, multiple vocals shouted in exactly the same pitch in each song, and kind of generic clipped political lyrics. The music and vocals remind me a bit of GBH. Well recorded and produced and all - just boring. (KB)

SOA c/o Paolo Petralia via Oderisi da Gubbio 67/69 00146 Roma Italy

Crepa/Corrosione - split LP

Corrosione are a bit reminiscent of early 80s Italian hardcore with that special indescribable guitar sound, galloping drums, punchy bass, and powerful shouted vocals. Totally raging hardcore songs that pound you with energy. There is a certain edginess - not due to any kind of holding back or timidity but to a sense of agitated energy - to the music that makes you seriously want to scream along and dance furiously. Live no one can stand still during their set. Lyrics (in Italian with English translations) deal with a variety of social/political topics. Crepa is definitely more new-jack sounding with a range of styles from mid-tempo punk (just to be clear about this term - I consider Black Flag to be mid-tempo) that sounds somewhat dark at times to super fast almost power-violence type songs. They still bear their Italian HC influences however and the different styles are blended together nicely to form a coherent fist-shaking listen. Lefty lyrics (in Italian only) about living life for oneself. A booklet on recycled paper with lyrics, an article on the famous Laboratorio Anarchico squat in Milano, 1 page from each label that put the record out, and a

cartoon is included. A co-production between 3 DIY Italian labels, this well-produced, nicely packaged record is easily one of the best of the year. (KB)

Agipunk/Alarma c/o Milani Gianpiero CP 63 27100 Pavia Italy or Decadance Dance c/o Andrea Fornaca via Forze Armate 105 20147 Milano Italy or Santiago c/o Dimitri Colombo via Marsala 33/b 20047 Brugheno Italy

Crispy Nuts - Will, 7"

Look out Kim Muff, here comes Tokyo's Crispy Nuts. I wonder what their name in Japanese is. The solid guitars, strong and high female vocals, great hum-a-ble chorus's, and that over all punk rock attitude. This is a must! Help out the Asian economy, and restore your faith in rock and roll by buying yourself a great release! (BC)

Wrench Records, BCM Box 4049, London, England. WC1N 3XX

Crunch_ - Worth Mentioning, CD

"Alternative sounding" rock band from Italy. Music didn't appeal to me much as it sounded like something that would be played on that "alternative" commercial radio station in every big city. 9 tracks of aggressive bass driven, guitar screeching crap rock... (DV)

Helter Skelter, Via degli Ausoni, 84_00185 Roma Italy

THE LETTER D**D'Rotzbouwen - 7"**

A mixed bag of influences here on this 7" from Luxembourg. At times they sound crusty as hell, other times black metal, and still others chunky hardcore. There's complicated riffing, a non-wanky guitar solo thrown in now and again, complex song structures, and really great occasional dual shouted vocals. The levels on the drums are kind of fucked up but other than that the sound is pretty decent. The lyrics are on the political/personal tip and all proceeds go to a Luxembourgish NGO (non-governmental organization) called Objectif Tiers Monde that works on development projects in countries like Cuba. A leaflet enclosed describes their projects. A worthwhile project with some good music to boot. (KB)

Skank Records c/o Steve Differding 102, rue du Parc L-3542 Dudelange Luxembourg

Dave Parasite - Back to Demo, 7"

This was a great idea to put Dave's demos from 1989-1991 all onto two 7 inch records. Six songs of spastic pop hits including the classic rocker "what do I get?" usually demos come out pretty bad and shouldn't be released, but this is an exception. These are pop treats! (BC)

AmPop Records P.O. Box 2271, San Rafael Ca. 94912

Die EEYORE - One Hump Babies, 7"

Sloppy punk from Dayton, Ohio. One of those bands that can fit a million tunes on a 7 inch.

Barfy, stinky, nasty, and funny rock. (BC)
D.E. P.O. Box 15 Dayton, Oh. 45409

Disembodied - If God Only Knew the Rest Were Dead, CD

Grindcore at it's finest. Heavy riffing with screaming vocals and occasional fast parts. Some really intricate chunky guitar riffs that don't end up sounding too metallic. What Helmet's first album would have sounded like if it had been HEAVY. Very cool. (MH)
Ferret, PO Box 4118, Highland Park, NJ 08904

The Dread - Collection, CD

This is some of the best punk rock I have heard since the Dwarves back in '92. The Dread are highly energetic and write great lyrics. A band who can use a minimal amount of chords to write a great song, but fear not to write outside the key of E. This CD compiles the Dread's vinyl only releases and split 7"s with other bands. You get 31 tracks in all, pick it up. (SY)
DummyUP, PO BOX 642634, San Francisco, CA 94164-2634

Drexel - No One Told Me, CD

It's NOFX in their 'Ribbed' days, but a little more sloppy. Drexel, however, does a cool cover of 'Rainbow Connection' by Kermit the Frog and tries hard with a cover of 'Screaming at a Wall' by Minor Threat. The other songs are speedy, melodic and employ that pop-punk start/stop technique. Pretty good stuff if you're into this sort of stuff. (SM)
Fork in Hand, PO Box 230023, Astor Station, Boston, MA 02123

Drowningman - Busy Signal At The Suicide Hotline, CD

This one is fucking great and the pick of the litter. Nothing but furious hardcore. We can use Deadguy as a means of sound comparison, but Drowningman is so much better. Dual guitars kicking out some really heavy riffs. One thing I'm a sucker for is good breaks, and Drowningman pull them off consistently. The song structure twists around and you should not expect any generic metal-core. Throw some really enraged vocals over the heaviness and you have one top-notch album. (SY)
Hydra Head P.O. Box 990248, Boston, MA 02199

The Ducky Boys - Dark Days, CD

Need I go one? Any skinhead or oi fan won't even need to read a review of this record - just knowing it exists is enough to rush out and buy it. As good an oi band as there is going, no doubt. Essential listening. Where would the skins be without GMM? (GG)
GMM recs PO Box 15234 Atlanta, GA 30333

Doutang - The Cons and the Pros, CD

Doutang play catchy little pop songs that bounce all over the place. Good rhythm but really annoying vocals. I just can't get into this, but I think some people may like it. Not bad, but not good. (JK)
Mint Records Inc. PO box 3613, Vancouver, BC Canada v68 3y6

THE LETTER E

Ed Temple - the act of gabriel, CD

Emo-core? More or less. It seems like this band would be more interesting if they were friends of yours, but keep an eye out for them if you are into the emotional hardcore. (MD)
Blue Moon Recordings. 2075 s University Blvd. #264, Denver, Co 80210

End Of The Century Party - Songs Dances Drums, 7"

The End of The Century Party combine song-writing of Mid-tempo hardcore and speed blasts and execute it perfectly. The packaging is simple and the inserts provide lyrics and illustrations. Right now, Florida is kicking everyone's ass in producing some great hardcore bands. To understand what I mean, just listen to this record, any Cavity Record, any Asshole Parade record, Palatka records... I could go on. (SY)
\$5PPD to ENSLAVED RECORDS, PO BOX 169, Forster Court, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD7 1YS U.K.

The End of the Century Party - Songs, Dances, Drums, 7"

Not sure if that's the title but that's what it says on the cover. I've never been too familiar with this band - I just have a few comps they're on. Hmm, this is a bit hard to describe. Really chaotic complex mix between emo of the heavy variety and power-violence is really the best I can come up with. Lots of unusual timing, screaming, and occasional whining guitars. Lyrics are kind of poetically political and bitter. I think I'd have to listen to this several more times before forming a personal opinion on it but it's well-done, well-produced, and nicely packaged. (KB)
Enslaved PO Box 169 Forster Ct. Bradford W. Yorkshire BD7 1YS England

The Eventide - single.98, 7"

Even though the sound is that basic heavy altern-rock-Tool- thing, this band rocks. A lot like Baltimores One Spotfringehead. Heavy guitars sliding into an emotional climax with lots of neat vocals and all that good stuff. Don't support the major label crap when our indie boys are doing it better! (BC)
Romance Label P.O. Box 3041 Danbury CT. 06813

Eversor - September, CD

I generally most appreciate music that hits my gut rather than my heart. I don't like emo. Eversor is classified by many as emo. However, I have to say I don't find their music annoying and insincere as I think of most emo bands and they don't quite fit in the category of tear-jerking suburban angst fueled crap. Their music is actually really pleasant - melodic without being poppy, emotional without being overly-prettyfied or on the precipice of breaking out in tears. Just safe and digestible. It's certainly not something I'd have expected to like but I enjoy

listening to this right before I go to bed. This is coming from someone who normally puts on something like MK Ultra or Indigesti before bed if that tells you anything. Lyrics in English. I applaud their efforts to make interesting packaging for an inherently uninteresting and stupid music format (CD). (KB)
Green via S. Francesco, 60 35100 Padova Italy

Ex-Ignota - s/t, 7"

This came out like 3 years ago. Ex-Ignota mixes sitars with guitars with distortion and plays noisy experimental hardcore. This is good... (DV)
Ex-ignota, PO Box 13946 Santa Barbara, CA 93107

Excruciating Terror - Divided We Fall, CD

A straight shot of gut-wrenching growls and screams, Excruciating Terror kick through this one flawlessly. It is reminiscent at times of Sore Throat and I got no problem with that. The guitars are a little bitey in the high end, but it just keeps your attention. No complicated rhythm changes, just straight thrash, containing no sound samples that could clutter up the intensity. 21 songs in 30 minutes, perfect for my short attention span. (SY)
Pessimiser Records, PO Box 1070, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254

THE LETTER F

Fallout - Tales from the Industrial Revolution, CD

Sounds like the Strike with garage rock influences and a crappy recording. It's speedy, melodic rock with harmonious choruses and solid rock guitars riffs. Pretty good stuff, but would definitely benefit from a more balanced recording and more energetic vocals. (SM)
Red Menace Records, P.O. Box 65112, 358 Danforth Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4K 3Z2

For The Love Of... - Feasting On The Will Of Humanity, CD

Keeping up with the Ferret tradition, For The Love Of... delivers more metal for the late nineties hardcore fanatic. I will admit this though; this is probably the best thing Ferret has put out since the Converge 7". Take the feel of bands like Overcast and combine this with crystal recording of the last Earth Crisis record and this is a basic overall description of what you are in store for. The riffs are heavy and intricate and the drums and vocals carry these nine songs with great ease, making this a well done piece of work. However, if you are seeking utter originality, this CD has a fair chance of drowning in a sea of mediocrity like the rest. (BR)
Ferret, P.O. Box 4118, Highland Park, NJ 08904

Forward Defence / Arms Reach - split, 7"

Both bands play raging political hardcore with intelligent lyrics. Forward Defence have a sound reminiscent of Crucifix, which totally fucking rules. Arms Reach have a slightly more generic sound, but still get the job done. Recommended. (MH)
Snapshot PO Box 175, Georges Hall NSW, 2198 Australia

Fracas - s/t, 7"

Gruff vocals and buzzy guitars on top of straight up boom-ch-boom-ch drumbeat. Not my cup of tea I'm afraid. In fact, it amplified my headache to even new heights of joy. (PK)
(Dead Sea Captain)

THE LETTER G**Gang Green - Another Case of Brewtality, CD**

It's been quite awhile since I'd heard any Gang Green. I was afraid of what might be on this disc, but from the opening chord to the end, this thing rages. Bud-soaked punk mixed with some rockin' sensibilities that could teach today's youngsters a thing or two about how to play hardcore. Excellent. (MH)

Taang! Records, 706 Pismo Ct., San Diego CA 92109

Good Clean Fun - Who Shares Wins, EP

Yes! It's people trying to inject sarcastic humor into the straight-edge scene. The spirit of Crucial Youth lives on! Good Clean Fun are all about being straight, sharing their things and having, yes, good clean fun. They sound like Seven Seconds mixed with Minor Threat with gang-style "crew" backup vocals and screamed lyrics. Songs about being positive and people who are true 'til college. You know it's good just from the back cover photo — a guy getting happy faces tattooed on the back of his hands. (SM)

Phyte Records, R.O. Box 14228, Santa Barbara, CA 93107

Grievance - 7"

I think this is their second 7" but I'm not sure. Gloomy, dark, brooding, screamy metallic hardcore. They sure know how to draw out these slow torturous moments interspersed with crunching guitars and rolling drums. The music comes across as kind of plodding which is unfortunate because they were one of the most powerful live bands I've seen this year. Some of the most amazing female vocals I've ever heard.

Lyrics in Italian with English translations. (KB)
Biba Records c/o Benin Leonardo via SS Salvatore 3 35017 Piombino Dese Padova Italy

Griver - 2 songs, 7"

Griver plays screamy, early 90's like emo/hardcore. Listened to this a couple of time and me like. Go get! (DV)

Point the Blame, 10738 Millen, Montreal, PQ Canada h2c 2e6

The Go Go Rays - Superhero Zero, CD

Pretty standard skapunk. "I Wanna be a Ramone" is a cool song though — a medley of Ramones with cool lyrics about the long hair folk. Other than that, pretty standard. (GG)

Eerie Records 2408 Peach St. Eerie, PA 16502

Gotohells - Burning Bridges, CD

Just as I give this band a good review on a single a few issues back and they return with a lack-luster CD that found its way quick to the "sell or give away" pile. The production on

this release is harder and more HC or metal than their earlier garagey sounding stuff. Even great titles like, "Hot Rod High" and "Teacher's Pet" don't make up for the change in sound. Once again I have to flip-flop and say that this band you can do without. (EA)
Vagrant Records 2118 Wilshire Blvd #361 Santa Monica, CA 90403

Gozzilla - E Le Tre Bambine Col Baffi, 7"

I wasn't sure what to expect from this when I saw the super goofy-ass artwork including a plastic Godzilla toy in a striped red and black tank top holding a huge mug of beer (I laughed out loud). It turns out that it's pretty much on the heavier side of pop-punk. Just saying pop-punk doesn't fully or accurately describe this band though — it is really goofy and funny with some musical surprises thrown in. The lyrics (in Italian) pretty much just make fun of people and talk about girls and beer. I give it points for the humor, the hilarious artwork, creativity, and good production though I'd have to be in a super silly mood to listen to this. (KB)

Animalaus Autoproduzioni c/o Andrea Grillo via Galilei, 57 04011 Aprilia Italy

Griver - S/T, CD

Why do they call this math rock? When I think of math rock I think of Don Caballero and other odd time bands that are fun to listen to, yet make you feel like you are doing long division. This is hardly the case with Griver. When the first tune kicks in, the vocals kick in not too far behind the music. The sound is intense but not over polished and I can't say that the band has too much sitting in the bass frequencies. This is all to my interest. The vocals remind me much of Chris Thompson when he was in Fury. The song writing does jerk from part to part; maybe that is where the math rock comparison comes from. This one is impressive and requires your attention. (SY)

Underworld Records, 10738 Millen, Montreal, PQ H2C 2E6 CANADA

Grover/Minute Manifesto - split 7"

Grover play fast energetic pop-punk with some of the worst "girl I like" lyrics I've ever seen. I guess it's catchy, well-done, and well-produced but I don't really dig pop-punk of this vein. They're one of those bands that it's good to dork out to every once in a while but other than that... Minute Manifesto on the other hand are brutal, fast hardcore with great crushing drums, straightforward guitars, and heavy distorted bass. The vocals are a bit too "ack!" for me but the lyrics are of the in-your-face-political variety. Overall the production is good and both bands are quite capable in their respective genres. (KB)

Grover 342 Bolton Rd. Radcliffe Manchester M26 3GP England or Minute Manifesto 56 Sutherland Rd. Lordshill Southampton Hants SO1 68GE England

THE LETTER H**Hallraker - She, 7"**

About a year ago, I saw an ad for this band's first 7", describing it as skate rock. Upon a first listen, I found it to be more mediocre hardcore rather than skate rock. Phyte has been known to put out a good amount of records I've liked so I figured that maybe this record better represents the band I disliked upon first listen. Basically, this 7" brings hints of mid-tempo, Dag Nasty-ish hardcore to mind but nowhere near as inspiring or good. The song inspired by the Simpsons could have swayed me with lyrics but none were given and the Led Zeppelin cover didn't help much either. (BR)

Phyte

Hardship - Sore / Stockcar, 7"

2 songs of monophonic hardcore. I emphasize that the whole recording is in mono because it strips away all glossy studio tricks and leaves the songs bare and raw. This is a great thing because Hardship have the song-writing skills. Their style is reminiscent of Econochrist with a lot of hooks in the songs. It's a pity that this is limited to a pressing of 200, for your chances of seeing it are slim. (SY)

TOMBSTONE RECORDS, 2825 E Burnside #148, Portland, OR 97214

Heartside - the triumph of the will, 7"

These Italians combine grindcore and hardcore into one very punk seven inch. (MD)
I think Records, Matteo Di Giulio, C.P. 14136, 20140 Milano, Italy

Heidneck Stew - Trials and Tribulations, 7"

Headache is as known a quantity as there is in the realm of oi and streetpunk, and fans of the genre should need no recommendation on anything they have put out. All will surely satisfy the aural needs of any fan. This is no exception, another ripper.

Purple vinyl. (GG)

Headache Records

Hot Water Music / Clairmel - Split, 8.5"

An 8.5 inch? Not quite a ten inch, but a little more than a 7 inch. It's a collector's dream. Right now, No Idea has the market for creating awesome looking vinyl and handmade packaging. Hot Water Music have their own sound and millions borrow from them. These songs are of the usual Hot Water format and are also catchy as hell. Clairmel play poppy melodic music which is reminiscent of early Jawbreaker without stealing Blake's voice. If you have not listened to their Fair Weather Fan album, you are missing out. This is a required piece of wax if you love both of these bands or if you are just a dipshit collector. (SY)

NO IDEA, PO Box 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604

THE LETTER I

Impel - Omnidirectional, CD

It's part hardcore, part rock. Screaming vocals that are kind of annoying mixed with low, crunchy guitars. Occasionally the vocals abandon the screaming and attempt singing, but end up sounding like Doc Dart from the Crucifucks attempting to sing hardcore. Which is kind of cool, really. But alas, this is nothing great. (SM)
Vinyl Communications, P.O. Box 8623, Chula Vista, CA 91912

The Inwoods - Buckwheat Bonanza, 7"

From the Inwoods of Florida comes this great funny hardcore punk unit. If you have missed that sound that we got off of the first Screeching Weasel record, then here it comes again! With hits like "Condom-ents", "Nintendo", and "I Hate T.V.", one must ask...how can you go wrong? Well, putting out a double live c.d. of this stuff may be wrong, but here you have it in a short and sweet 7 inch. (BC)
Hot Sauce P.O. Box 372116 Satellite Beach, FL 32937

Ivy Crown - s/t, 7"

At times reminded me of Friction mixed with the Promise Ring on the heavier side, but not really at the same time. Emo rock from Michigan. Choppy mixed with slow melodic parts and poetic lyrics. (DV)
Backroom Records PO Box 530722 Livonia, MI 48153

THE LETTER J

J Church - Travels in hyper Reality, CD

Ten songs from the infamous J Church. Having lost a little of their magic on me, this disc still made me realize that few have the pop sensibility that Lance has. Take anything from Cringer or J Church and put it up against the heavyweights and Lance wins almost every time. It was nice to see that this appears to be all new tracks. Also comes as a ten inch record as well. (EA)
Helter Skelter Via degli Ausoni, 84-00185 Italy

Jargon - s/t, CD

As like almost all bands coming out these days, Slint influenced sound mixing with bad vocals. College rock/emo/indie rock. Mix Slint with like more poppy stuff like the Promise Ring and this is what you can get. (DV)
Lobster Records PO Box 1473 Santa Barbara, CA 93102

Jen Wood - No More Wading, CD

Acoustic never sounded so sweet. Jen Wood is familiar to those who listen to Kill Rock Stars or the Yo Yo comps from her Tattle Tale days. Lots of stuff out there and you can lock yourself in your room and sing along, even if you are a boy (just don't let your friends know). In all seriousness, this is a great disc and a breath of fresh air after listening to a Dead Kennedys cover compilation. Thank you, Jen Wood. (EA)
PO Box 578582 Chicago, IL 60657

Joan of Arc - How Memory Works, CD

Here is the follow up album to Joan of Arc's "A Portable Model Of". A diverse array of songs which boast many different sounds within themselves. Like riding the Joan of Arc plane and wondering when you're going to get off. Moody and mellow with the blip-bloo-bleep and the ting-ting-ting. I'm always interested in the hook-up of rock and electronica. The vocals lessened the music for me tho. Eh well. (PK)
Jade Tree, 2310 Kennwynn Rd., Wilmington DE, 19810

Johnny Revolting - trailer park cold, CD

"Trailer park cold" is for the Ramones-loving drunk skateboarder in your town. (MD)
Revolting HQ, 127 Broadmoor Dr., Tonowanda, NY 14150

Judgement - Haunt In The Dark, 7"

Crazy elaborate gatefold packaging for this one. Japanese hardcore anthems featuring members of Bastard. The lyrics are good and the whole thing is worth a listen. As far as Japanese thrash goes, I would say this stuff is mediocre. (SY)
H.G.FACT, 401 Hongo-M, 2-36-2 Yayoi-Cho, Nakano-Ku Tokyo 164 Japan

Just One Day, CD

Just One Day provides Japanese punk, a little bit on the hardcore side, a little bit on the catchy side, with some noisy undertones. I would definitely recommend this to those who are stuck in the Fat Wreck Chords vortex, as well as to fans of hardcore who need something a bit, but not much, lighter. I see swarms of head boppers really digging this. (MD)
Snuffy smile, 4-24-302 daizawa, setagaya-ku, tokyo 155, Japan

THE LETTER K

Kevorkian - s/t, 7"

Two songs for intricate emo chaos from Prague. Creamy, scratchy vocals mixed in well with metalish choppy music. Packaging is awesome as the record is too. Write and obtain!!! (DV)
The Gramophone Company of Minority Limited, PO Box 113, 110 01 Prague 1, Czech Republic

Kill Me Tomorrow, 7"

Oooh... it's pretty. Dreamy-sounding indie pop with girl lead vocals and boy backups. It all falls together nicely and sounds pleasant. Mid-tempo and relaxing. Oh, and it's got the thickest cover I've ever seen for a seven-inch. (SM)
Kat Recordings, P.O. Box 460692, Escondido, CA 92046

Kill Sadie - #2, 7"

Kill Sadie good. Play emo driven hardcore. Music is energetic as it is interesting. This one worth checking out. (DV)
THD, Jason Parker, PO Box 18661 Minneapolis, MN 55418

Klinika - Tourdion, LP

This starts off pretty typical of Polish punk in the tradition of bands like Post-Regiment. Pretty upbeat, mid-tempo, clean punk with clear melodic vocals on the edge of sounding harsh and some ska beats. Rolling music that's pretty easily palatable (er, for punks anyway). The inclusion of an electric violin lends them a sound that definitely distinguishes them from other Polish punk bands though their roots and influences are clear. I really love the violin and their music in general but I mentally groan every time I hear the ska guitar parts. Aside from that though the music is creative and the production good. (KB)
Nikt Nic Nie Wie PO Box 53 34-400 Nowy Targ Poland

Kodiak - s/t, 7"

Fast chaotic screaming emo from Texas. Don't think this band is around anymore but the 7" is still worth obtaining. Pretty good. (DV)
Watership Records Box 8760, Austin, TX 78713

Krupted Peasant Farmerz - Peasants by Birth, Farmers by Trade, Krupted by the Dollar, CD

This was out on LP a long time ago and has been almost impossible to find for the last couple years. Why is that always the case with all the best records? California Pop Punk from the early 90's with a Very Small Records affiliation. The recording is great and KPF definitely have the skills of songwriting. No clean and shiny production, no thumping bass drum, it is a sound lost with most of today's pop punk bands. The CD does give you some compilation and live tracks as an added bonus, to this gem of a record. (SY)

Coldfront Records, PO BOX 8345, Berkeley, CA 94707

Krzycz - Trauma, LP

These are some pretty long songs. I'm not really sure how to describe them. A lot of them are kind of moody- at times quiet and introspective, almost lulling, and at other times heavy and noisy but almost always deliberate and slow. Not boring but not exactly energetic either. The songs are played with skill and are of good sound quality. I don't know, they'd be fitting for a kind of slow-paced black and white film set in dark alleys, cafes, and pubs. Creative and interesting enough that I think this could really grow on me over time, especially the 8th track with the pianos and lurking bass. Very different. Lyrics in Polish and English. (KB)

Nikt Nic Nie Wie PO Box 53 34-400 Nowy Targ Poland

THE LETTER L

The LaDonnas - Rock You All Night Long, CD

This is the shit bro. Real rock and roll. No ifs ands or buts. Take dollops of Motorhead and the Hookers, mix well and you'll be at the sound. A great record, and typical for Scooch Pooch type quality. (GG)

Scooch Pooch records 5850 W. 3rd St. Suite 209, Los Angeles, CA 90036

Lockjaw - gutted, 7"

If you are hardcore and listen to the hardcore, then Lockjaw is right up your alley. They look tough, sound tough, and could probably beat you up. But don't offer them malt liquor - they are straightedge. (MD)

Thank the Knife, PO box 10282, Rochester, NY 14610

Lostribe - Guide to Survival, CD

Overdone 80's like pop punk/ hardcore. Nothing new, exciting or unique. Take any generic pop punk riff and add vocals that are not snotty, screaming, or shouting and you get Lostribe. (DV)

Amendment Records 580 Nansemond Cres Portsmouth, VA 23707

Lounge - Punk Rock Superheroes, CD

Squeaky-clean pop punk. Speedy drum beats, clean stops and starts, melodic vocals and Ramones influences. We've all heard this stuff, and we keep right on hearing it as more bands learn the formula and run with it. These guys do it well, but do little to push the envelope.

And the CD cover is really cheesy. (SM)

Triple Crown Records, 331 W. 57th St. #472, New York, NY 10019

LSR - Welcome to the American Experience, CD

Funky Techno Drum & Bass stuff with no songs under like 15 minutes long. I don't really know a lot about techno, but I think this is pretty good stuff. The beats are really tight, with lots of real trippy sound effects and stuff.

Less repetitive than most Techno I've heard. I bet if I did drugs I'd dig this a lot more. (JK)

Vinyl Communications, PO box 8623, Chula Vista CA 91912

THE LETTER M

Mach Kung Fu - Exotic Exhaust, CD

Crazy surf with no farsifas and ridiculous vocal workings. Weird stuff - good for avid surf types and fans or weirdness in general. (GG)

Giant claw records PO Box 192 east Melbourne Australia 3002

Mad Caddies - Duck and Cover, CD

Ska-core for an audience who enjoys skanking yet appreciates the finer things like malt liquor and spikes. (MD)

Fat (to the) Wreck (to the) Chords

Majority Rule / Turbine - s/t, split 7"

Getting records such as these are both exciting and disheartening at the same time. I love to hear new bands but rarely am I ever moved or shocked. In this case, it could be partially because these bands just weren't quite ready for vinyl and perhaps, never will be. For instance, Turbine gives you two pop punk numbers that reek of unoriginality and offer little, if anything, profound. Majority Rule is basically as unoriginal, playing metallic, old style hardcore with gruff vocals. However, they are tight and this may be something that will benefit them in the long run but for now, they are a fish in a sea filled with sharks. (BR)

Submit Records, 803 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910

Marilyn's Vitamins - Politics on the Dance Floor, CD

Ah, good old punk rock. It's nice when it's done without taking the cheeseball cliches to extremes. The band, while not avoiding cheeseiness, belts out good old raw street punk with enthusiasm. The CD has cut and paste layout, the band members have punk rock last names, the songs have angry political lyrics, and it's all good fun. (SM)

Raw Energy, 65 Front St. W., Suite #0116-42, Toronto, Ont., Canada, M5J 1E6

Meatjack / Superhighway Carfire - split, 7"

For some reason, the layout made me think of a pop punk record but for other reasons, I knew that I would be wrong. I was. These two newcomers are on the heavy-groove side of things with a little noise thrown in to fill the void. Meatjack is the heavier of the two, being noisy, metal styled punk with strained vocals that bring to mind early Helmet with some Today Is The Day aspects abroad. On the flip-side, Superhighway Carfire is not far behind in the heavy department, playing bass heavy, noise rock, if you could call it that. Neither band was at all bad, just a little out of my range.

Although, I feel I should mention that

Superhighway Carfire is a great name. (BR)
Infernal Racket Records, P.O. Box 4641, Bethlehem, PA 18018

Mineral - EndSerenading, CD

Heartfelt melodic alterna-rock. You know the kind I mean. Slow, plodding, melodic songs with good musicianship and a singer who is sorta pouring his heart out into the mic. Unfortunately, this bores the shit out of me. However, for what it is, it is excellently done. Whatever. (MH)

Crank! 1223 Wilshire Blvd #823, Santa Monica CA 90403

A Minor Forest w/LSR / Panophy Academy Glee Club, Split 7"

This is a benefit project for the Midwest Books to Prisoners Project. A great project as both tunes are. A Minor Forest does a more slower melodic tune this time around and PAGC was

a bit more slower than that. Was a good listen and you should buy this and support this project. (DV)

PO Box 1223 Bloomington, IN 47401

Misconduct - Signed in Blood, 7"

Late 80's Westcoast like punk hardcore coming from Sweden. 6 song 7" of fast tight somewhat politically charged punk. Pretty good. (DV)
Bad Taste Records, Stora Sodergatan 38, 222 23 Lund Sweden info@badtasterecords.se

Mix Master Mike - Anti-Theft Device, CD

Finally, an independent hip hop review.

Funny how we never see any independent hip-hop reviewed in this magazine, yet plenty of emo music that even our parents could enjoy. There has been a resurgence of the art of DJ-ing in the last five years, and as with most forms of music, there are usually a few good artists, and a ton of shitty ones. Mix Master Mike is at the top of the list for the best. He shows an expertise of taking bits and pieces of samples and sound and mixing over beats, while utilizing a high sense of creativity. He is also a member of the Invisible Skratch Picklz crew who make up some of the best DJs in the world. Of all the releases and performances I have heard by Mix Master Mike, Anti-Theft Device is not his best. You haven't heard or seen anything until you have heard this guy mix with two copies of Rush's "Tom Sawyer". Anti-Theft Device is a good album of beats and craftsmanship, yet there is a 12" done before this that is brilliant. You can also check out Mix Master Mike's "Wrists of Fury" Video and there are some really good tapes too. Coincidentally, Mix Master Mike is also the Beastie Boys new DJ, and for a bunch of dinosaurs, that is only helping their career. (SY)

Asphodel, PO BOX 51, Chelsea Station, New York, NY 10113

Moonraker - The Age Of Light, 10"

A band that might have taken their name from one of the worst James Bond films. Yet the film Moonraker does have Jaws in it, who happens to be one of the coolest villains next to Oddjob. This record is awesome from its creative packaging to the music itself. Moonraker remind me much of Moss Icon in the ways that they are moody and dynamic. They do have a tendency to get heavy and noisy in ways that are more like Slint. Regardless of who they sound like, they are really good at what they do and this piece of wax is recommended by myself. (SY)
NO IDEA, PO BOX 14636, Gainesville, FL 32604

My Pal Trigger - lessons in ancient history, CD

Catchy emo-pop for the rainy days when you still feel like dancing. If you liked their last album, "lessons in ancient history" will not disappoint. (MD)

KatRec PO box 460692, escondido, ca 92046

THE LETTER N

N.J. Joystick - ...a mile and change, 7"

Joystick are four boys from Jersey playing real toetapworthy tunes. One boy has been graced with the same name as Spacemen 3/Spiritualized guy. Or vice versa. Music to bounce to, with nice lyrics. Sounds cheezy but fuck it, every good girl deserves cheese, yup. Preferably swiss. Like the Brian and the Wilson, shameless PK harmonized along with this in a cabin feverish state. Hee. (PK)
5 Lyons Mall, Box 132, Basking Ridge NJ, 07920

Naked Aggression - Gutwringing Machine, CD

As like the last couple of releases from this band, not really too good to their early stuff, but none the less lots of kids seem to like them and will buy it anyway. As usual, catch poppy/aggressive punk rock with political lyrics sung by Kirsten and Phil with the "woah" and etc... This, to my understanding is the last release from this band as Phil has passed away a couple of months ago. (rip) (DV)
Cargo Music 4901-906 Morena Blvd. San Diego, CA 92117-3432

New Wave Hookers - CD

For some reason I want to group this band in with the B-Movie Rats. The look of both bands in pictures and their mutual styles (not necessarily sound) seem to be similar. This is a Junk Recs release, so you know it's at least decent and in a rock and roll vein. Both of these are true - and this is in fact a very solid rock and roll record with healthy bits of blues and RnB involved. (GG)
Junk Records PO Box 1474 Cypress, CA 90630

No Tomorrow Charlie/ Gone Bald, Split 7"

No Tomorrow Charlie, a band from Belgium mixing organ sounds with guitars, similar to something on Touch & Go a while back. Go Bald, from Croatia doing very noisy guitar sounds, bass driven with vocal effects of putting a megaphone on top of a mic. Interesting listen. (DV)
Sint Pietersaalstraat, 43 bus 3, 9000 Gent Belgium

Noise Pollution/ Antabuse, Split LP

Noise Pollution reminded me a little of Filth but more straight out punk, (meaning not as heavy). Pretty good. Antabuse had this screaming metalish punk hardcore. Pretty decent release over all. NP vs. Antabuse = NP!!!!
Antabuse PO Box 14391 Chicago, IL 60614-0391

Nora - Kill You For a Dollar, CD

The main problem with this is it is too short. 10 minutes on a CD? What's the point? The music here rages, though. Heavy grindy hardcore with jagged vocals. They get into some cool riffing that has a nice groove to it, while the singer is screaming his head off with tales of personal angst. (MH)
Ferret, PO Box 4118, Highland Park, NJ 08904

North - s/t, 7"

Members of Goodbye Blue Monday, I am Heaven, and Elements of Need form this slow indie rock/ emo Discord today sound. Nothing like Elements of Need. Pretty music, was an interesting listen. (DV)
The Mindwalk Recording Label PO Box 22514
Philadelphia PA 19110-2514

Nothing Cool - what a wonderful world, CD

All the skateboarders in the house say "yea-ah!" [All the non-skateboarders say "nay-ah!"] (MD)
Dummyup, PO box 642636, SF, ca 94164-2634

Notorious - L'Ombra Del Passi, 7"

Well, it's kind of strange to review this because I got an advanced copy burned onto CD before the final mix with no insert. I guess this can be considered to be on the heavier, screamer side of emo. It's pretty dark sounding usually with some interesting musical twists - bubbly bass, organs, and some weird dissonant parts. The music is pretty interesting and creative but the singer seems to only be able to hit 2 different pitches and the music is a bit too chaotic for me. I'm just guessing here but it kind of sounds like the vocalist from Concrete. (KB)
Valium c/o De Maggi via Capo Palinuro 35 00122 Ostia (RM) Italy

Nukes - Produce No Fruit, CD

Limp-sounding rock that suffers from a flat recording. Sounds kind of like Pegboy if they were really tired and uninspired. (SM)
PopSmear Records, 6687 Sonoma Hwy., Santa Rosa, CA 95409

THE LETTER O

Obliteration - Social Revenge, LP

This must be the day of the funny grind bands. The music in general is pretty typical of the kind of generic grind I'm not too fond of - low roar vocals, guitars that just scramble frantically everywhere and the same style of million-mph drums in every song. Their normal songs are pretty bad but their super short 3 second blasts are really great and one song in particular, "Skantimilitarist" really stands out as amazing. It starts off with funk slap-bass and cheesy drums, moves onto ska, then the grind vocals kick in over the ska and it develops into a full-on grind song. Totally awesome. Not all of the lyrics are printed but those that are included are pretty pissed off and political. They're all in Italian except for 2 (I personally really enjoy the lyrics to "Our Greetings" which consist solely of "Fuck off!!!"). There's a little handwritten note in my copy that says "On SOA Records" but a separate little flyer inside says it's self-released so I'll give the band contact info instead of the label's. (KB)
Pietro Dell'Aquila via G. Andreoni, 6 04011 Aprilia Italy

One Dog's Opinion - No Guts No Glory, CD

At times these guys have that hillbilly punk thing going on ala Elmer, and at other times are more sorta plodding punk rock. Even though they're from Florida, this is goofy fun with a western tinge. Recommended. (MH)
Trailer Park Records, PO Box 15706, West Palm Beach, FL 33416

One Man Army - Dead End Stories, CD

I'm not quite sure where this band is coming from but I know that it is of no interest to me whatsoever. The reason I say this is because at times it sounds pop punk and at others, it sounds like bad Rockabilly. Either way, it is the wrong formula to grab my ear and the combination of the two could cause a near death experience. For those of you that are going, "Hey, I think that combination sounds good!", first; excuse me while I laugh and second, imagine a cross between any random pop punk band and Hi-Fi and the Roadburners. (BR)
Adeline, P.O. Box 11470, Oakland, CA 94611

THE LETTER P

Party of Helicopters- Abracadaver, CD

I really like the guitar playing on this one. It is melodic and all over the place. Musically, the Party of Helicopters are much like the Universal Order of Armageddon. Ok, they really sound a lot like U.O.A. I like the vocals because they sound like they were recorded twice and it gives a nice delay effect sounding like two vocalists. In its entirety this album is enjoyable, but I can't think of anything original about it. They stole the delay effect that the Rye Coalition used on their Teenage Dance Session 7". (SY)
Donut Friends, 1030 Jessie Ave, Kent, Ohio 44240

Peaceful Meadows vs. Stink-Rumble In the Vinyl, 7" x 2

Oowee, it's like a mini battle of the bands between, uh, two bands. You can't really call this a split 7" because you do actually get a hunk of vinyl per band. The music itself is fast, fierce, and poppy. So whoo wins the rumble o' rock, you ask of the Patti? I'm giving the golden rooster to Stink for the sultry vocals on "You Done Me Wrong", share it boys! Impressive packaging—looks like Muhammad Ali is pitchin' a tent, hoo! When We Were Kings, hup to it. (PK)
Allied, PO Box 460683, San Francisco CA, 94146-0683

Palpatine - Fourteen Ways To Embrace Death, CD

Looks can be deceiving, I learned this with this CD. The artwork is comprised of skulls and gloom-filled photos and a band photo that looks like they are an insane live act, to say the least. I'm expecting an Unbroken / Converge type hybrid and instead, I got fast, simple punk styled hardcore with strained vocals. At first, I was confused but, it didn't take long to figure out that I was disappointed. But, I probably would have been disappointed with the former description as well. (BR)
Slow Gun, 4760 Blue Mountain Dr., Yorba Linda, CA 92887

Penfold - Your Eyes have All the Answers, 7"

Total emo, baby! Honestly, I know nothing about this stuff. I have heard terms like "mathcore" and "chaotic emo," even "indy rock emo." (The latter of course used to be just indy rock but now has gained the "emo" tag. It all has to do with the branding mentality industrial America has burdened society with. Or at least I imagine it to be so.) Which one this is, I am not entirely certain. It leans towards indy rock-ness, but isn't super bouncy like a lot of other bands. Does it sound like the Promise Ring? I have no idea. Mineral? Dunno either. But if ya like emo, look for this. (GG)

Hearts Down Recs 204 Raritan Ave. Highland Park, NJ 08904

Penis Fly Trap - Tales of Terror, CD

Oh god. Let me start by describing the cover. The band is sitting around a table having dinner. Their faces are painted white, their hair is dyed bright red. they've got fake blood dripping out of their mouths, which are covered in black lipstick. On the table is a dead girl, which the band is "eating." It's goth meets punk in the worst way. Now the music: pitifully simple punk with terrible vocals singing awful lyrics to songs with names like "Cemetery Girl" and "Tears of Blood." I hope these people are embarrassed. (SM)

Bloody Daggre Records, 7336 Santa Monica, Blvd. #705, W. Hollywood, CA 90046

Petrograd/Soul Season - split 10"

Petrograd give us more of their particular and unique brand of melodic punk which could be called jangly pop. All of their songs have this fuzzy, trebly production that makes the music hard to categorize. Mostly personal lyrics with dashes of political messages thrown in. For you more light-hearted punks. I seriously doubt Soul Season will appeal musically to many of you out there with what could best be called a mix between classic rock and alternative music of the Soundgarden/Alice in Chains variety. They are strictly DIY according to the enclosed booklet if that strikes your fancy. All lyrics in English. (KB)

Skank Records c/o Steve Differding 102, rue du Parc L-3542 Dudelange Luxembourg

Pink Flamingos - Crippled Silence, CD

This is a recent release of a bunch of their tracks from 7"s, splits, and comps spanning from 1992-6. I can't believe what a great band I've been missing out on here. Heavy, brutal, fast hardcore with an amazingly deep, full sound. With a name like Pink Flamingos and frivolous dominantly pink artwork I wasn't sure what to expect and I'm definitely pleasantly surprised. These 34 super-tight hardcore and almost-grind-crust tunes clock in at an average of about a minute or minute and a half each. Pissed off lyrics are mostly in English with a few in German. Excellent mastering and production as well. Great stuff. (KB)

Thought Crime c/o Thomas Franke Proskauer Strasse 22 10 247 Berlin Germany

Product - Dedication, 7"

Straight-edge hardcore from Italy. The production values on this are pretty muddy.

Overall, the music is excellent straight ahead hardcore, but the singer doesn't seem to sing along with the music, which makes this feel kinda off-kilter. (MH)

Twilight Records, MBE 120 V. Della Grada 4/E, 40122 Bologna, Italy

Punjab - 7"

Weeeeeirrrrrrd! Almost like an episode of the Twilight Zone in a way - Promise Ring meets Dazzling Killmen or Mama Tick. (Really any band on that label that included comics in their records. They all sounded the same.) (These digressions are getting out of hand, I know.) Dirgey noise gone emo. (I should tell you that millenium fever has me looking for signs of the apocalypse - weird happenings and such - I am that weird. Regardless, I was thinking that if I were to branch out my search into punk music, this record could be such a sign - emo dirge? Who woulda' thunk it?) (GG)

Communications Recordings Solo 6285, 761 93 Norrtelje, Sweden

THE LETTER R

Redheaded Stepchildren / The Infected - split, 7"

Relatively generic hardcore from both bands, that is decent but not amazing. The music is, for the most part, fast and heavy. The standout thing on this seven is the lyrics. So many times young hardcore bands have lyrics that are simply stupid, but both bands here write about personal politics that seem well thought out. (MH)

Eugene 215 W. Vista Dr. Lexington KY 40503

Reina Aveja - Bee Complex, 7"

Well, if anything could have instilled instant turn off, it would have been the information in the info sheet. Ex-members of Less Than Jake is enough to make me frown in a heart-beat. Luckily, this is as far away from ska-punk as you could possibly imagine. Reina Aveja delivers a metallic, girl punk sound with definite garage roots abound. The vocals alternate between deep growls and high pitched screeching, giving it a slight Dead And Gone feel and the overall focus of the band seems to have a political slant. However, it didn't grab me in a way that made me sit up and take notice so the decision is yours. (BR)

Probe, P.O. Box 5068, Pleasanton, CA 94566

Rest Assured? - Opiate for the Masses, CD

I really did not like this. 9 tracks of generic metal-punk-hardcore-whatever... I gave this a few listens and nothing, absolutely nothing sticks out to me except for the singer sounding like the guy from Youth of Today at times but the music is no where near comparison... One song about fashion/status in punk, one song of "no more songs of hatred", etc... booooooring...(DV)

Roacho 13 PO Box 163 Dumont, NJ 07628

Reubens Accomplice, 7"

Reubens accomplice comes off like a North Carolina indie-emo rock band, but the lads are actually from Arizona. So I guess it's a dry rock then. This is good stuff with nice vocals. The slower parts in the songs make you pay more attention rather than put you to sleep as in most emo cases. (BC)

Jerk Records 15836 n. 2cd Ave. Phoenix, AZ. 85023

Rotten Sound - Psychotic Veterinarian, 7"

With song titles like "Anal Sadist", "Police Raped a Pensioner", and "Brains Putrefy" you can pretty much guess what this sounds like: grindcore a la early Extreme Noise Terror. I must be starting to become accustomed to grind or something (I used to hate it) because I actually really like this quite a bit, tongue-stuck-in-throat, harsh grating vocals and all. There are some hilarious sound effects in between the songs made by some guy with a mic (sounds like the vocal representation of the title of this 7") that get more and more funny with each listen. Unfortunately my copy was missing the insert which I have a strong desire to see. This is an awesome record. (KB)

SOA c/o Paolo Petralia via Oderisi da Gubbio 67/69 00146 Roma Italy

Rudimentary Peni - Echoes of Angulsh EP, CD

Yet another very influential anarcho punk band releasing 12 more raging anthems. Comparing to the older material, it's a little different, in the sense of less samples and effects and a little bit slower in my opinion, but still pretty good. This is a band that sprung out during Crass' time hailing from the squats sing about politics in a fashion as aggressive but also different than Crass. Pretty good. (DV)

Outer Himalayan Records PO Box 59 London n22 1AR United Kingdom

THE LETTER S

Scalplock - To Hate Is to Cure, CD

Wooooah!!! 28 tracks of hardcore/ thrash hailing from England! Layout of booklet done Crass style as lyrics are political, ranging from songs about the current situation in Chiapas, Mexico to exploitation of third world countries, etc. This 3 piece plays fast, heavy, screamy trash, blast beats an all! If you're into stuff on Slap-a-ham check this out! This is pretty good...wish I caught them when they were in town....(DV)

Insurrection PO Box 2576 Colchester, Essex co3 4ay England

Scum of Society - 7"

This pretty much sounds like what it is - the first demo of a band re-released on 7" It's a band obviously in its infant stages - old school 3 chord hardcore with shouted gravelly vocals. Angry but somewhat generic anti-authoritarian lyrics in Italian with some English translations. Don't get me wrong, some of the songs are all

right but I think this is primarily for current SOS fans that want to hear the old stuff with their former lineup. The sound quality is pretty good for having been a demo. (KB)
 Applesquince via di Mezzo, 12 01100 Viterbo Italy

Seam - The pace is Glacial, CD

Seam play little quiet pop songs that sound like a lot of other college pop rock that I've heard-A few decent songs but the majority is very bland. Some people may like this but not me. (JK)
 Touch & Go PO box 25520 Chicago, IL 60625

Self-Destruct - Live or Lose, CD

I want to like this. The band obviously put a lot of effort into DIY, and their lyrics are intelligent, if somewhat simplistic. Unfortunately, the music is under-produced generic hardcore with very few shining moments. This band might be capable of releasing a good full-length in a couple of years, but right now, they should have limited themselves to a single. (MH)
 Self-destruct, 1872 Leonard Lane, Las Vegas NV 89108

Sharks Keep Moving/Kentucky Pistol - split, 7"

SKM play decent, slow indie rock. KP play faster, more rocky indie rock, with touches of punk and a slice of Pavement reminiscent vocals. Both sides are a bit mediocre, but worth listening to. (MD)
 Henry's Finest Recordings, 16128 NE 145th St. Woodinville, WA 98072

Sheilbound - s/t, 7"

Pop emo from Cleveland that reminded me of a mix of the Promise Ring, Mineral, etc... Nothing new or exciting. (DV)
 4400 Perkins Ave. Cleveland, OH 44103-3544

Short Millie - Foe of Someone Else, CD

Ska-punk. 9 songs of snotty vocals, horns, etc... Sounds like Less Than Jake crossed with Slapstick and other ska bands!?!?! (DV)
 Whitehouse Records 830 Baylor Wissman Rd Lanesville, IN 47136

Skrulgners - La Cosa Che Non Ha Importanza, CD

Italian punk rock. Lyrics written and sung in Italian so really don't know what they're singing about, but has a song called Straight Edge. 16 tracks of poppy punk, mix Anti-Flag early raw Screeching Weasel. Not too bad... (DV)
 Abraxas Export, Piazza Maltoni 16-50065 Pontassieve, Firenze, Italy abraexp@tin.it

Slapshot - Old Tyme Hardcore, CD

Slapshot is kind of like an old pitbull. Now matter how old it gets, it always makes it's presence known and continues to bite and scratch. Although they strayed from their formula for a bit earlier this decade, Slapshot is back (sort of) with more of an original line up and more bitter hardcore anger for only the toughest of the tough. Again, here is another band that influenced me greatly in my youth and if in the right mood, I can probably find things about

this record that I'll like but Slapshot has long since seen their best days and maybe hanging it up for good may be the best choice. For a better representation, check the Slapshot file under "Step On It". (BR)
 Taang!, see Battalion Of Saints

Small Brown Bike - (And Don't Forget Me), 7"

Perfect from start to finish. The packaging is more elaborate than a 4-year-olds pop-up book. I feel like I should frame the damn thing. Don't let the artiness fool you, inside you get some fine Michigan Hardcore that is heavy while retaining a pop sensibility. That is Small Brown Bike. The lyrics are emotional and personal but you shouldn't have a hard time applying them to your own life. (SY)
 A Salinger Press/ Utilitarian Press Split, 180 Rosetta, Auburn Hills, MI 48326

Snapshot - S/T, CD

Like band from this band? No insert, lyrics or even description written on disk. Bootleg? Well has 7 tracks, few songs on each and some even recorded at a different date and venue. From England? Really do not have a clue. Music sounds like mid eighties hardcore, fast poppy at times and not too heavy. (DV)

Spunk - Texas, CD

This band has opened for White Zombie, L7 and Babes In Toyland and has played "over 1,000 live rock (rock being the key word here) shows according to the info sheet. This gives the idea that this band probably is not good. Upon numerous listens, I heard a pop punk influence with a strong Alice In Chains influence. This should conclude that this band is really not good. (BR)
 Copperlound, no address

Stealth - Zero To Mach 7, CD

Vocals remind me of early Bad Brains, but just like later Bad Brains this is pretty terrible. Music = commercial rock that can be compare to bands like Red Hot Chili Peppers... (DV)
 2112 Records, 15 Mont Royal W. Suite #110, Montreal, Q.C. Canada h2t 2r9

Stool Sample / Bloody Sods - split, 7"

If you took GG Allin's lyrics and put them to Antiseen's music, you'd end up with Stool Sample. In other words, heavy music with bonehead lyrics. Bloody Sods have somewhat more intelligent lyrics, but their songs aren't as good. They play straight ahead 3-chord hardcore with gruff vocals. Uninspiring. (MH)
 3150 E. Hwy 34 #246, Newnan GA 30263

Straight Faced - Conditioned, CD

I remember when I bought the Insted LP on Epitaph when it came out. Up until recently, this was the last hardcore record that Epitaph had ever thought about putting out, seeing as though radio friendly "punk" was what that label was making their living off of. Well, it seems as if hardcore has gotten so big that now Epitaph is back with a vengeance (notice the heavy sarcasm)! Anyhow, I didn't quite realize

that this band was so big because I never hear anything about them. After I listened to this CD, I couldn't think of anything that sets this band so far apart that they have the capability to sell the amount of records it takes to be on such a label. From what I hear, the music is similar to Madball meets Strife with hip hop-esque vocals that remind me of early Brothers Keeper. In other words, I didn't like this. (BR)
 Epitaph

Strangulated Beatoffs - s/t, CD

This is one the most brilliant pieces of utter self-indulgence I've heard in a while. Strangulated Beatoffs are a duo from St. Louis, Missouri, which comprises one hockey-lovin' Fritz Noble, and one pot-smokin' Stan Seitrich. Together they take unique samples and loop the fuck out of 'em until you feel like you've been lured onto some other mental plane. I particularly enjoyed the sample that goes "Oh my favorite carob-flavored, gluten balls!" (!!!) I mean, how good IS that?! (PK)
 Skin Graft, PO Box 257546, Chicago IL, 60625

Stratford Mercenaries - No Sighing Strains of Violins, CD

This is the current project Steve Ignorant, (Crass, Schwarzenegger) Gary from Dirt, and Phil (from Buzzcocks?) are doing. This is much more different than the other Stratford Mercenaries I've heard, (straight out political punk rock). I think that this is more leaning to a mix of some Swartzenager material and the direction of more artsy/ experimental sounds, (meaning some songs uses keyboards, horns!!!!). Yeepie!!!! None the less the lyrics are well written, (of course), and this 6 song CD is worth checking out!!! (DV)
 Southern Records PO Box 577375 Chicago, IL 60657 USA or Southern Records Box 59 London N22 1AR. UK

The Stuntmen - Cheap Date Serenades, CD

This band has always underwhelmed me, and I think the reason might have something to do with the New Bomb Turks comparison someone gave me. I know that really isn't fair, but that's the way it goes. Now that my confessional is behind me ... this release also fails to impress. It just comes across as rock with any oomph. It fails to do much exciting and the vocalist is a touch laid back for my tastes. On top of that, the recording is lacking - sounding very muddy. (GG)
 Thermoplastic Records PO Box 30712 Philadelphia, PA (home of Pat's Steaks!) 19104

Sunday Puncher - 7"

Two more songs from this Brooklyn based indie rock band. Mix the Van Pelt and Slint and you get this. (DV)
 Turnbuckle Records, 163 Third Ave #435, New York, NY 10003

Svart Sno - Smock 'N Roll, LP

Swedish Hardcore, 1984 style, I can't enough of it. Buzz saw guitars and great speed. The lyrics are all sung in Swedish but translations are provided. Subject matter is social-political

and Svart Sno have a tendency to be lyrically potent without being generic like so many others. Great cover art. 14 songs and every one is of worth. (SY)

PRANK, PO BOX 410892, San Francisco, CA 94141-0892)

Swallowing Shit - Love is the Act of Being Moved Into Action, 7"

This is apparently a repress, though I've never heard the original. Amazing noisecore with right on political lyrics about religion, Indian rights, parental abuse, and women's rights. Through solid wall of guitars with screaming vocals strange noises creep through. If your a crusty and you don't have this, you're missing out.

Commode, 1637 Evergreen Hill SW, Calgary AB T2Y 3A9, Canada

THE LETTER T

Tedio-Boys - Bad Trip, CD

If The Cramps and JSBX went out drinking, they'd probably head back to the studio and make an album that sounded something like this. Not quite psychotic blues-tinged hillbilly music. Kind of spazzy, but overall a fun and fucked up album. (MH)

Elevator Music, PO Box 1502, New Haven CT 06511

Think Again, 7"

In their own words: "pro-community, machismo-free, positive hardcore." (MD)

Prophecy Records, 6049 Lake Brandt, Greensboro, NC 27455

Three Steps Up - S/T, CD

Yuck, very grunge mixed with later life 7 Seconds. MTV would have been all over this a few years ago. (EA)

Break Even Point via Vallebona, 28_00168, Italy

Touch Is Automatic - s/t, 7"

There are a number of things about this record that annoyed me from the start. The cover has nothing but an artsy photo on both sides with no text. Second, this has a big hole and finally, the information that was included told me nothing about this band at all. Musically, this has a very blatant D.C. influence and it reminds me of Shellac but I can't quite pinpoint why exactly because is so much better. With the lack of information and lyrics, this comes of as way too pretentious for my liking. (BR)

Sterling, 323 3rd Ave. Apt. #2, Eau Claire, WI 54703

Toxic Waste/ Bleeding Rectum - We Will Be Free, Split CD

Collection of previously released material from both bands on one CD. Toxic Waste is an anarcho punk band from Ireland as songs are about conflict in Northern Ireland, peace and so on. Two singers a guy and a girl and music can be compared to early early Ex/ Crass/ and a tad bit of Dirt. Bleeding Rectum...hardcore punk rock!!! Music heavier and faster as some

songs are political and some songs covering issues of heroin fucking people up, etc. Two great bands = 1 great CD and if you missed picking up the splits with Man is the Bastard, Fleas and Lice, Stalag 17, etc, definitely pick this up!!! (DV)

Rejected 9 Woodlands Ave., Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin, Ireland

Trepan Nation - Banish Gods From Skies and Capitalists From Earth, CD

Excellent 4-chord melodic punky hardcore with speedy guitar solos and strained (but effective) vocals. At times, their music reminds me of Minor Threat or bands of that ilk. 17 songs on this CD, with the last one, 6 Foot Sore Thumb, a punk rock loser theme song... and punk rock needs more losers. Cool. (MH)

Harmless Records, 1437 W. Hood, Chicago IL 60660

Tunnel Rats/Hellstomper, split 7"

The Tunnel Rats are B-Face's, ex Queens, band. They are much tougher than the Queens. Much tougher. Hellstomper plays rockabilly style music but with distortion and harsh vocals. If you wear a black leather jacket to many of your social functions, then this 7" is for you. (MD)

Woundup Records, PO box 3695, Kansas city, Ks 66103

THE LETTER U

United Blood / Pressure Point - split, 7"

Two songs each from these Oi bands. Both bands play quality sing-along Oi. Great for stomping around the house in your combat boots while drinking a pint or two. United Blood does a straight ahead number and one that is more of a drinking song, while Pressure Point covers the Clash's "Police on My Back" plus one more. (MH)

Coldfront Records, PO Box 8345, Berkeley CA 94707

THE LETTER V

Vidi Vitties, 7"

A weird guitar-rock foursome, playing a mix between surf rock and Spanish guitar songs. Most songs have no vocals. Actually, most songs just suck. Blah. (SM)

Peek-A-Boo Industries, P.O. Box 49542, Austin, TX 78765

Voodoo Glow Skulls - Band Geek Mafia, CD

By now most of you probably know what to expect from the Voodoo Glow Skulls: hard, driving, fast punk rock with some ska horns thrown in for good measure. To call the Glow Skulls a ska band as some do is quite a stretch, as only maybe one song on this album could really be considered a ska song, and the rest, have only maybe a slight ska flavor thrown in. I have to admit that I didn't really like the Glow Skulls much at first and didn't really

expect to like this very much, but after listening to this a few times it has begun to grow on me. There are some really great songs on here and many had me humming a long time after my first listen. The Glow Skulls handle the Punk/Ska fusion much better than a lot of band's that I have heard who focus too much on goofiness rather than songwriting. I guess this CD falls into that "If you like this type of thing..." category but even N you don't think you like this kind of thing you may want to give it a listen just to make sure. (JK)

Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90026

Voodoo Love Mint - The Dreaded California Icepick Test, 7"

College rock...I can hear some early Dismemberment Plan like parts going on. Was an ok listen, but nothing that really appealed to me. (DV)

Sterling Records, 1310 Park Street Suite 106, St. Paul, MN 55117

THE LETTER W

Wat Tyler/ Ex-Cathedral/ Jessie/ Kabinboy - Alive In Ireland, CD

Live recording of all bands as 40 percent of money made goes to the Warzone Centre in Northern Ireland (venue) Wat Tyler never seems to let me down when it comes to humor. 7 songs from them as they blast away with songs called the Smurf Song, Hops & Barley and so on. Jesse is another band which never lets me down. Frankie Stubbs started this project after Leatherface called it quits. Imagine a less aggressive Leatherface, (aggressively well written poppy punk rock), with the same old Frankie Stubbs writing and singing amazing songs. These two bands were recorded at the second DIY festival in Dublin, August of 1997. Ex-Cathedral plays a mix of ska like songs and pop punk in the vein of early Snuff, but more aggressive at times. Kabinboy = noisy metal rock. These bands were recorded at the Warzone Centre earlier the year of 1997. All bands are worth checking as this live recorded CD does not sound like a shitty tape recorded bootleg. (DV)

Active Distribution BM Active WC1N 3XX London, UK

The Wednesdays - American Midnight, 7"

Basic punk from Tooth and Nail records. White T-shirts, sideburns, punks, guns, cowboys... you get the idea. (BC)

Tooth And Nail P.O. Box 12698 Seattle, WA. 98111-4698

Wood - [@#], 7"

Emo-core from Italy, yet the band sings in English. Do you like emo-core? Do you like crossing borders? (MD)
Cycle records [in Italy] Adri & Luca fontaneto. Via Muratori, 95/b -28060 Lumello (NO) Italy. augusto@msoft.it

WROUGHT: ironsmile - This is My Song, This is My Story, 7"

Lo-fi emo pop music with a few bursts of energy now and again. This is kinda cool in that it has a very underground DIY feel to it, but frankly, the music pretty boring. Still, fans of mellow emo stuff might dig this. (MH)
Her Magic Field Records, Mariehems 19C-10, 90653 Umea Sweden

THE LETTER Y**The Young Hasselhoffs - Win a Date With..., CD**

Never been a huge pop punk fan. This should be made clear right off the bat. (Actually, this isn't true. I was a pop fan like 4 years ago. I was a late bloomer when it comes to my main musical interest.) that said, this is high quality stuff - stuff that I may not listen to a lot personally, but pop fans will go ape for. Cool doo wop stylings and harmonies galore. Sure to please. (GG)
Melted Records 12-41 34th Ave Suite 10A Astoria, NY 11106

Youth Against - La Revolución de Los de Abajo, LP

Totally blistering raw hardcore attack is the name of the game of the full-length from this long-running underrated Chicago band (formerly known as Youth Against Fascism). Tight drumming, simple but ferocious guitar, pounding bass, and some of the best current shouting vocals filled out with angry backups. At times reminiscent of early 80s and current Italian hardcore the music is tight and full-on raging. The lyrics - in Spanish and translated into English) deal with the general themes of exploitation, injustice, revolution, and freedom. This is one record that shouldn't be passed up by any fans of hardcore. (KB)
Alarma c/o Jose Villanueva PO Box 6193 Chicago, IL 60608-6193

THE LETTER Z**Zed / 309 Chorus - Split, CD**

2 bands on this CD-Only Release. Zed play Nausea-styled hardcore. Most of their songs are driven by a heavily distorted bass, yet the guitar comes across as melodic. 309 Chorus is made up of ex-members of the band Damitol, who at one time were one of the best bands in the Great Lakes area. Melodic hardcore that is heavy and not forgettable. Definitely a good listen. (SY)
Goatboy Farms, PO BOX 42098, Philadelphia, PA 19101

VARIOUS ARTISTS**V/A - All Power To The People, Not The State, CD**

Benefit compilations should never be disputed. This CD is a benefit for the Black Star Collective and proceeds will go to the Mumia Abu-Jamal Working Group of Refuse \$

Resist and the Black Star Collective. There are explanations inside the booklet that tells of their intentions and where to obtain information. As far as music goes, that standout tracks would go to Good Riddance's awesome cover of "Feel Their Pain" by Insted (which is strange, seeing as though I don't like Good Riddance) and Parade's End. Other familiar faces would include Submission Hold, I-Spy, Naked Aggression (are they still around?), Malefaction and Citizen Fish. Those will most likely be the selling points but I sincerely hope that those who make this purchase read the information that it contains because projects like this should become more crucial to the punk scene. Worthwhile in every aspect. (BR)
Black Star Recordings, P.O. Box 5081, Torrance, CA 90510

V/A Apathy is No Excuse For Failure - 7"

The What's Wrong track scared me when it first started, sounding a bit Korn-ish. It got past that and turned into a hardcore song - a decent fast number. Their next song is more of the same: fast 3 chord HC with kind of unremarkable NYHC type vocals. Unfortunately the sound quality on the Skol track is so bad (they apologize for it) that it's pretty hard to make anything out but it seems like fairly original dark-sounding hardcore. Side B seems to be the more melodic side. Phillippé are jangly mid-tempo emo with personal lyrics. Petrograd don't really fit into any category but they're super melodic, I'd almost say pop - clean guitars and sweet vocals. Kind of an eclectic comp. (KB)

Skank Records c/o Steve Differding 102, rue du Parc L-3542 Dudelange Luxembourg

V/A - Cry Now, Cry Later Volumes 1 & 2, CD

Damn, and I almost traded my Rorschach/Neanderthal Split 7" for these two volumes on vinyl. Not that it would have been a bad trade music wise, but we are talking in terms of availability. It is a good thing that they made this series available again because it is essential. More than 2 dozen bands, that dangerously jump across the lines between hardcore and speed metal. The bands you get? Spazz, Eyehategod, Capitalist Casualties, Excruciating Terror, Dystopia, Grief, the list goes on with lots of C.O.C. inspired riffs. The CD also gives you four bonus tracks that were not on the original vinyl. As I said before, these recordings are essential. (SY)
Pessimiser Records, PO Box 1070, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254

V/A - Fuck You Punx vol. 1, 7"

Four bands on blue marble vinyl. Eight Bucks experiment: sludgy redneck rock. Familymen: speedy garage rock. Super Buick: redneck rock, sans sludge. Giant Killer: snotty punk rock with poppiness. Nothing bad, but certainly not good. (SM)
Blue Moon 2075 University Blvd., #264, Denver, CO 80210

V/A - Hatari! / Hamlet Idiot, split 7"

Hatari! are a vocal-less mess. Tinny, disjointed guitars and drums slop all over the place, trying to sound angst-filled and coming off only as incompetent. Hamlet Idiot save the record from going in my pile of "vinyl that should never have been produced," but not by much. They lay down mellow guitarwork over almost hip-hop drums and bass - again without vocals. They sound just weird enough to be almost cool. Still, avoid this. (SM)

Envy Recordings, P.O. Box 6118, Newburyport, MA 01950

V/A - In A Sharp Malaised Key, 7"

3 bands from Washington DC. 1 from Arlington, VA. Telegraph Melts had this Slint like instrumental thing going. Lower Reed Bread Gang had a nice pleasant slow melody that consists of 1 bass player and 1 clarinet player. Laconic Chamber = slow indie rock in vain of...maybe Rachel's???? (a tiny bit at least) Urb.elec.admin consists of 1 person on drums on 1 on guitar. Fast tight indie rock like instrumental. Definitely different than the rest of stuff for review this time around but pretty good. (DV)

Nightshade Records 1623 Irving St. NW, Washington DC 20009

V/A Italia La Punk - 7"

Mmmm! Here we have some of the best of current Italian hardcore virtually exploding out of the record as soon as the needle touches it. The always brilliant DDI covers Negazione's "Tutti Pazzi" in their special super fast, sounds-like-old-Italian-HC-but-different way. Crepa's track blasts away in a mixture of power-violence and old Italian HC in a refreshingly creative attack of the eardrums. The Sickoid's song is the only one in English - totally blistering fast punk fueled by (of course) early Italian punk. For crust-lovers there's a brutal track by BDO, heavy and fast, distorted bass, pounding drums, and dual vocals. In a more traditional 3-chord vein is Scum of Society gracing us with a fast energetic number a bit reminiscent of early 80s American hardcore. One member of DDI and one from Corrosione play in the great La Maschera - pretty much straight ahead old school Italian HC with an edgy sound and super political lyrics. Insult also sound very old school Italian HC-ish with a really amazing bass player (one of those dbblblblbdl all over the place kinds). Since old Italian HC is my favorite style of punk, I couldn't ask for a better sampler of the current Italian HC scene. Unlike most comps, every song on this one smokes. And it's totally DIY, every band has something to say, and the cover has a picture of the Wretched. What more could you want? (KB)

Agipunk/Alarma c/o Milani Gianpiero CP 63 27100 Pavia Italy

V/A - It's a Punk World...After All vol. One, CD

Most of the bands on this comp sound very similar...fast, catchy, more poppy than hardcore, pretty straightforward punk rock. All 27 tracks come and go without much lingering memory and include some pretty cheesy covers of some pretty cheesy songs. (MD)
Strap-on Records, PO box 266, Santa margarita, ca 93453

V/A - Japan Punk Kills You, CD

There must be something in the sushi in Japan that produced amazing punk bands, because almost every band I've heard from there has produced excellent punk rock and hardcore. All 20 bands here are from Japan, and most you've never heard of. All of them play super solid punk and pop punk. Excellent. (MH)
American Pop Project, PO Box 2271, San Rafael, CA 94912

V/A - Mission Control Presents Super Heroes Series vol. 1, CD

Sinkhole, underhand, Link 80, and MU330 provide a variety of punk and ska-core for all of your punk rock "fucking shit up" tendencies. (MD)

V/A - No More Heroes, A Tribute to the Stranglers, CD

A Stranglers tribute? Well, at least it isn't another Dead Kennedys tribute. Actually, not being a Stranglers follower I enjoyed this disc and particularly enjoyed the nice mix of sounds ranging from straight up rock n roll to punker sounds and horns and all sorts of craziness. Find another comp that can pull together the Dead End Kids, Candysnatchers and US Chaos in one place. (EA)
Elevator Music PO Box 1502, New Haven, CT 06511

V/A - No Pants, CD

A benefit compilation for KSCU 103.3 in California, you get what you expect. A few heavy hitters found on this: Hi Fives, Mr. T Experience, The Donnas and a bunch of names that aren't so household. Very pop-punk and the sound quality is above average for a live CD and a few hidden gems. Though I do not want to ever hear a pop band like MTX put a Dead Boys song and add a ska beat to the chorus. Oh, Stiv is rolling in his grave. The Donnas track may be worth the price alone. Fifteen songs that you may

not really need, but a real fun disc and a good cause (college non-profit radio) never the less. (EA)
NO Pants KSCU, 500 El Camino Real #3207, Santa Clara, CA 95053

V/A - Oh Canaduh 2, CD

Good compilation concept: current bands cover old Canadian punk songs. The first volume was cool - the Man or Astroman? Song is worth the price of admission alone. This one is pretty cool as well, due largely to the manner in which a lot of these tracks have been recorded. All are pretty lofi and hold onto the spirit of many of the original tracks, which is nice to see. One of the more exciting comps I've picked up in a while. (GG)
Lance Rock Records 1223 College Drive Nanaimo BC, Canada V9R 5Z5

V/A - Peter the Great / Mr. Crispy, 7"

Mr. Crispy = Screeching Weasel. It's all there: the slightly-gravel vocals, the goofy songs about girls, the quick stops and melodious choruses. Formula pop punk, but not bad. Peter the Great: more pop punk, but not as melodious or goofy. Songs are more straightforward. Again, not bad. Two songs each. Marble vinyl. (SM)
We're Not on a Label Records, P.O. Box 5816, Edmond, OK 73083-5816

V/A - Shit Like a Champion - the South Bend Area DIY comp, CD

With slight variations, every band on this compilation plays old-school punk rock. Bad recordings, shitty musicianship and general juvenile-ness pervades. The bands: American youth, Angry Noise, The Antics, Blue Owl Circus, The Bruce Campbell Band, Cervates, Corporate Circus, The Dead Beats, Durge, Elephant, Hooligan Riot, The Jerkoffs, The Ninjas, Restricted Vision, Societal Blasphemy, Crash Annoyance, My 3 Thumbs. Yucko. (SM)
Plinko Productions, 1001 E. Wayne St., South Bend, IN 46617

V/A - The 3-Way Dance, CD

The bell has rung and the fight has begun! This bout features No Redeeming Social Value, Romantic Gorilla and The Six and Violence. To pick a winner for me is really not possible because I found all three bands to be nothing close to what I would generally like but if this was a No Disqualification match, I'd have to say that No Redeeming Social Value would win because they are

funny, if nothing else. I think it's pretty safe to say that the guy behind this label is way too into pro wrestling, even for his own good! (Just for the record, I am also way too into pro wrestling for my own good so, the general idea of this release made me want to like this CD all the way through. Viva la Sandman!) (BR)

Striving For Togetherness Records, P.O. Box 564571, College Point, NY 11356-4571

V/A - Tombstone Park, CD

This is a horror punk compilation. Who would have figured that horror movies have inspired so many bands that do not sound like the Misfits? Ok, there might be some bands on here who love Glenn and crew, but you also get doses of Rockabilly, Pop-Punk, Hardcore, and Ska. The bands come from all over the US and Canada, including 9 bands from Ann Arbor. The Ann Arbor bands are my faves including Mazinga, Nadsat Nation, The Brewts, and The Fags. Horror Punk is something that most of you don't look past the Misfits for, so you should check this out. (SY)
Reanimator Records, P.O. Box 1582, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

V/A - What were we fighting for? A Dead Kennedys tribute, CD

This is exactly why punk is so boring and stale in 1998. There is only half a good song on this disc, Vitamin L do "California Uber Alles" and add some hip hop elements to the chorus. Otherwise every band went straight up and covers the originals. Remember the Dead Kennedys tribute on Alternative Tentacles Virus 100? That was good, Nomeansno did an a capella version that was killer. Any ways, this has a bunch of bands on it that I won't mention cause I don't want you buying this. (EA)
Know Records PO Box 90579 Long Beach, CA 90809

V/A - You Don't have to be Tom Jones vol. 2, CD

This compilation has is full of a bunch of bands. Here are the bands: The Tank, Man without lan, Smartbomb, and Kid with man head. Each band plays a few song and they all scream a lot. Nothing much else to say really... (JK)
Coolidge Records 157 Coolidge Terrace Wyckoff, NY 07481

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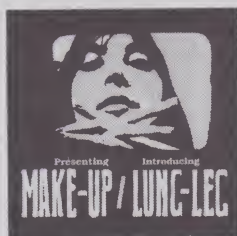
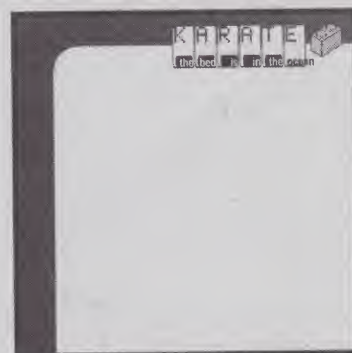
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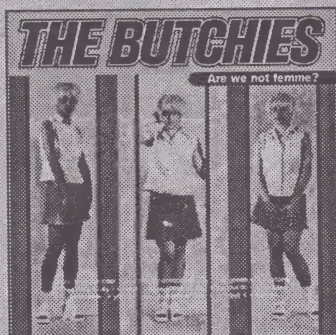
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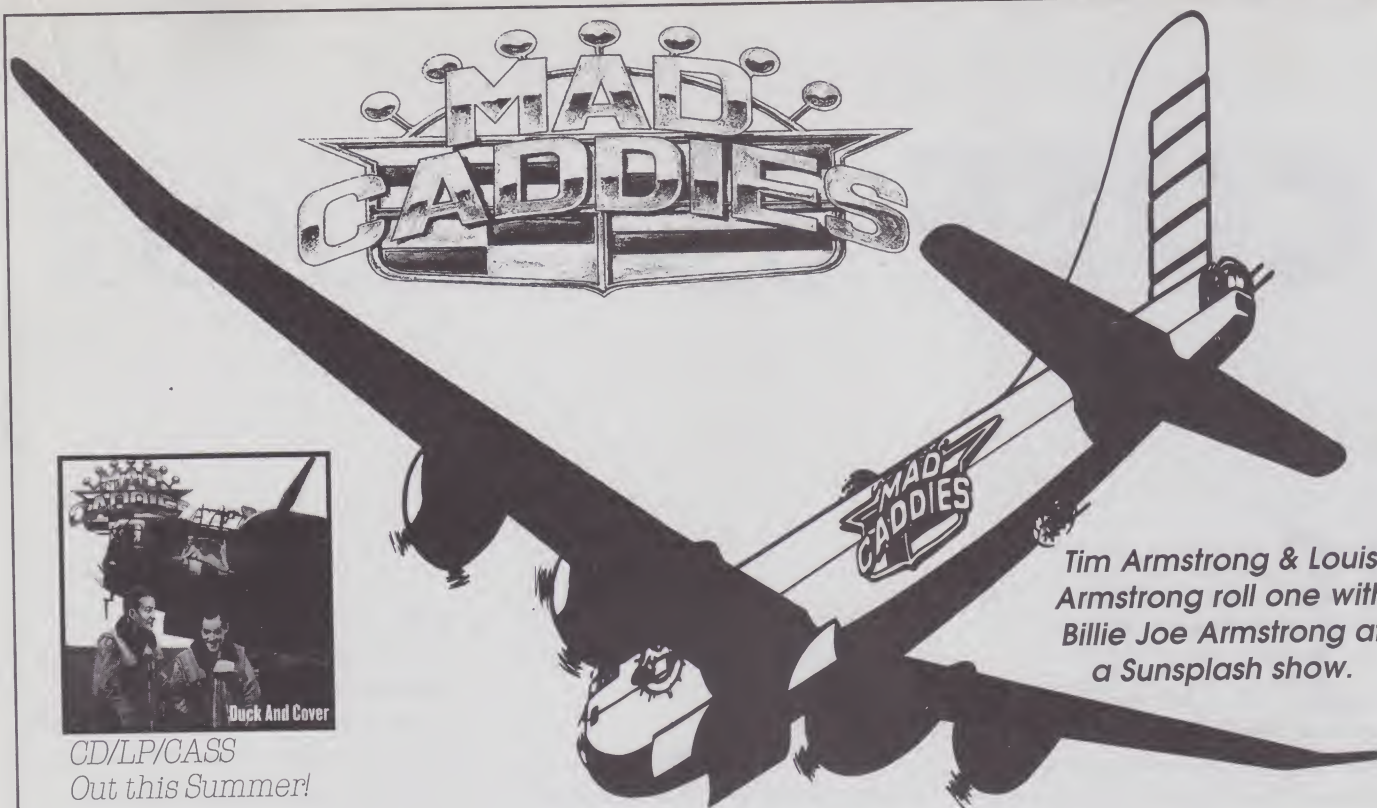


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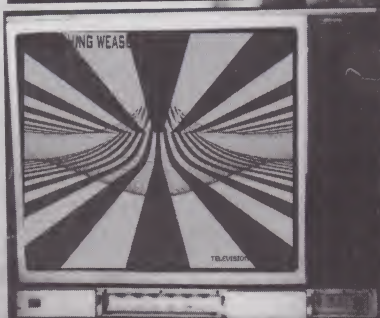
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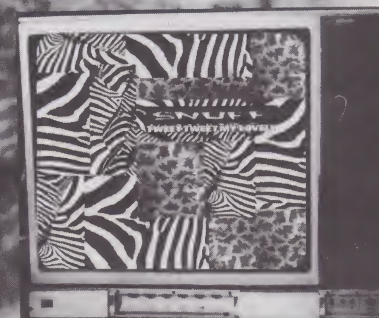
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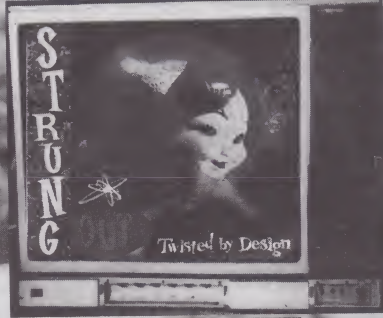
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CUFF X-LARGE

T

his column is wholly devoted to THE CHICAGO UNDERGROUND FILM FESTIVAL, one of the most interesting and enjoyable film festivals around the globe. Year Five was a good one, lots of filmmakers in from all over the world and great crowds. Mr. Paul Morrissey, who directed the later Andy Warhol films, was this year's Lifetime Achievement Recipient. I love how CUFF can blend so many levels and so many genres into one festival, from punk to gay to leather to feminist to arty to technology to narrative to experimental to current to classic to scatological to spoof and much, much more.

This year kicked off with one of my favorite films, *MEN CRY BULLETS* by Tamara Hernandez (who I can tell you from experience is one hell of an arm wrestler!) See past columns for full review, but I'm happy to say that the film was very well received, often cited as a festival favorite from the numerous attendees and winner of the Audience Choice award! Star actress Honey Lauren was there as well, impressing everyone with her glamour and bowling skills! Other great films that showed that I've reviewed before were *LITTLE SHOTS OF HAPPINESS* by Todd Verow, a 35 mm print of *LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE FABULOUS STAINS*, which I got to present to an almost sold out audience!, *DECLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION III* (Winner of the Documentary Gold Jury Prize) where the goddess of punk rock film, Penelope Spheeris, showed up and rocked the fest, and the popular psychotic documentary *CIRCUS REDICKULESS* by Phillip Glau.

What were some of the good new stuff? I didn't get to see everything, but here's what rocked me:

Shorts

ROADHEAD—Winner of the Animation Silver Jury Prize. This was done by the same people who do the MTV spots with the black and white animation where different heads appear talking during the same voice. I guess it's some kind of computer animation and when makers Bob Sebiston and Tommy Palotta (*THE HIGH ROAD*) have full creative control, it's an amazing experience. From the beautiful countdown to the animated "Batt Low" flashing at the end, *ROADHEAD* is a lyrical, intensely creative experience that puts a new twist on the road trip film. The filmmakers drove from New York to Austin, interviewing egghead intellectuals, former bank robbers, homeless guys, waitresses and cheesy tarot readers along the way. All the while their faces shift from one image to another making you realize the impact of a face even when it's connected to the same words. The animated road footage is a gorgeous blaze of color in contrast to the stark interviews and at the end, the computer/camera is turned on the filmmakers themselves as they talk about their trip, only to be interrupted by a friend who hasn't seen them in a while. It's a nice reminder of the 'realness' of the videotaping process that gets lost in most 'documentaries.' One of my favorites at the fest. Contact Flat Back Films at 4204 Ave H, Austin, TX 78751 or floyd@ml.media.mit.edu

DOWN CLARK STREET—This is a charming love letter to Chicago's Clark Street from past CUFF Lifetime Achievement recipient and longtime filmmaker, Tom Palazzolo, who serves as our disheveled host. Both humane and intimate, Tom talks to all types and makes you care about the past history of the street, even if you've never been there. Contact him c/o Chicago Underground Film Festival, 773-866-8660.

HUBCAP - Totally gross horror Super 8 schlock that was so perverted, how could I not like it? Hot lezzie sex and big fat evil cops. Super un-PC with no redeeming qualities whatsoever. Contact Torn Earlobe Productions at 271 E 10th St #1968, NYC, NY 10009 or mix@echonyc.com

WE HATE YOU LITTLE BOY—This was so mean it was funny. Shots of a little boy playing with means worlds running across the bottom like "We hate you little boy! Die, Die, Die!" Cuts to an old man "We should have put a pillow over your face when we had the chance!" Contact Janene Higgins at, 31 East 6th Street #2, New York, NY 10003, or myrakoob@echo-nyc.com

TV MINISTRY—Rising scatological star Mark Hejnar (maker of the gross documentary *AFFLICTION*) is back, playfully thumbing his nose at the weirdness of television. The editing here is amazing, from tons of crazy sources, some familiar some obscure, intercut



UND ERG ROU N'D

with members of the TV Ministry, who, of course, worship television. Each cut of found footage has some connection with the narration and with the clip that came before it, both in subtle and powerful ways, this is really hard to do. Everything from outtakes of a light crashing down on Hillary Clinton on a talk show (for real!) to porn to game shows to religious to weird ads to maggot footage to news (great sleazy news montage), Mark says more about the strangeness of TV than any other commentary out there, all by letting it speak for itself. Contact Mark Hejnar at PO Box 578503, Chicago, IL 60657-8503 or mhejnar@earthlink.net

HOME—Douglas Buck made a shorter film called CUTTING MOMENTS that had such realistic FX of a married couple cutting themselves to shreds that nationwide guys were fainting and barfing during the screenings. A lot of the same themes are explored in HOME, but just not so obviously bloody. The thing that makes Buck's films so creepy is the internal torment of his characters, there's no cheese in his splatter. In HOME, we slip into the mind of a husband/father of a girl who is ruled by his intensely dysfunctional past. His lead actor is creepy, but also has a vulnerability that draws you in. The repression in the story is smothering but invisible. I've never seen such power in the unspoken. Very hard hitting and dark. Contact Voice In The Head Productions at

220 W 14th St Apt 4C, NYC, NY 10011 or dougduck@earthlink.net

HEADLESS AT THE FAIR—This is a fairly lush film shot on 35 mm. It's slicker than what I'm used to at CUFF, but it's so visually cool and the story is so charming that I was won over. The story is that this girl has babysit this retard boy by taking him to the fair. She drags her best friend and off they go. Minimal sets for the carnival enchant, a brand of Southern gothic that glows and shimmers. A freaky angel of mercy gets slapped by the girl and in the end, asshole football boyfriends go down. What else do you need from a film? Contact Headless at 6146 Bryan Pkwy, Dallas, TX or dblood@flash.net

WHY DO YOU EXIST?—Here's the latest from Nick Zedd. A huge pair of tits with whipped cream starts off an in-the-camera's-face showcase of freaks including Kembra Pfahler, Mike Diana, and a close up of a nice-looking penis (how Fassbinder!) and lots of big sexy chicks. Contact Penetration Films at P.O. Box 1589, New York, NY 10009.

KITTY PUNCH—Ah, what to do when you're girlfriend leaves for a week with the cat in heat? Andrew J. Schlusel, who did the hysterical BABY KABOB, returns with a sick little ditty of Cat Love. One of three cat puppet films in the festival and by far, the funniest and sickest. Contact Andrew J. Schlusel at 1344 Ocean Ave #6, San Francisco, CA 94112 or shortles@hotmail.com

by Sarah Jacobson

Punk Planet

A WAITER TOMORROW—One of the few films in the fest with guns a la Tarantino, thank God. Luckily, it's a spoof on the kung fu mania that has swept the nation. Michael Kang delivers a fantastic story of sushi waiters pushed over the edge, avenging service job hell and racist Asian remarks. Goes beyond the one line gag into some interesting plot twists, including a love story! The action scenes are ambitious and well executed. A goofy, funny film with a real rage and something to say, topped with excellent comic timing. Contact Kang Is Man at 253 E 10th St #9, NYC, NY 10009-4841 or KangIsMan@aol.com

JUST DESSERTS—This was one of my absolute favorite shorts. It was so strange and funny. Its with these tough schoolchicks beating up on this little kid until he pulls out his BB gun. Before the preteen shooting media stories of late make you uncomfortable, the kid goes on to have all these crazy, homemade Bond-esque devices bringing us back into comedy as he wheels away on his cute little bike. The Angel of Death comes in the form of a fat-boy comic book nerd. This movie is so weird! Careens into a *Terminator 2* spoof with animated killer Jell-O chasing after them. Only spoons can stop it. The weapons and FX are totally sophisticated, especially for a geek-starred film. Obviously this wasn't done by science nerds in their basement. Show down in the Acme Spoon factory is pretty great and the ending is melodramatically wonderful. I love the wasteland suburban motif. The credits are almost entirely made up of family members. If anyone knows more about how this movie was made, please let me know. Jewell Productions, 3208 Myra Ln, Dallas, TX 75234, ericjewell@juno.com

ANIMAL CHARM—I mentioned these guys in my last column and when I got to Chicago, where they are from, they were getting a lot of attention from being at CUFF. Half of it was "These guys are geniuses!" and half of it was "These guys suck!" Still, they're getting shows all over the globe, so congrats Rich and Jim! The program I saw had these four films: STUFFING, which had weird monkey

footage, surreal repetition, matched with animated porpoises as monkeys seem to watch four-wheel drive trucks careening and stopping. Accessible if you have a sense of humor and open mind; SLOW GIN SOUL STALLION—horse running, horses kissing, strange music, new way to deal with found footage, more as a sampled rap song than as direct social commentary; LIGHTFOOT FEVER—musical number with deer footage, new freaky landscape to totally reconstructed sound and visuals; WORKING TOGETHER—my favorite, this one is a POV of paparazzi footage looped with weird ass music. The woman sitting next to me cried out "Enough already!" just before the loop ended with the title card, "Thank You." A full tape of their stuff is available from Peripheral Produce (see last column). Contact them at 2513 N California #487 Chicago, IL 60647, or www.animalcharm.com

SOMEBODY GOOFED—Winner of the Animation Gold Jury Prize. A few columns back I wrote about the film ANGELS?, a reenactment of Jack Chick's infamous Christian mini-comic book about a Christian rock band who sold themselves to the devil. It looks like the start of a trend 'cuz SOMEBODY GOOFED is another Chick inspired flick, this time using animation and striking graphics to tell the story of a kid who chooses to believe in non-violent liberal Christianity instead of fire and brimstone, only to realize his mistake too late! Beautifully cinematic and excellent appearance by Satan. Contact NurEye Films at 250 Mercer St, NYC, NY 10012, Rodres@aol.com, <http://www.nureye.com>

NEW TESTAMENT—Great spoof of wine cooler commercial as sold by Jesus. Inventive and funny. Swankytown, 1413 Sanborn Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90027 swankytown@earthlink.net, <http://www.swankytown.com>

WASHINGTON DC SHOW—Meet Fanboy, We Need a Staple Gun, Monster Truck Parking Lot, Neil Diamond Parking Lot, Out of This World, Outtakes of Heavy Metal Parking Lot are the highlights in Jeff Krulik's IT CAME

FROM DC showcase. For more info, contact jeffkrulik@internetmci.com

FRED ARMISTEN'S GUIDE TO SXSW—A last minute edition, this one had me rolling on the floor. Fred is one of the guys from the band Trenchmouth and a born comic. This video is him disrupting the music convention South by Southwest in Austin. Fred doesn't let up for a second and his shticks are so convincing that there's just as much fun in the tension of his act as the perplexed reactions of his interviewees. It's always funny and never nasty. Some of Fred's pranks: Interrupting panels with inane questions, going up on panels and pretending he's the speaker with the audience enrapt, interviewing the Knitting Factory guy, then posing as him to some hapless rock star wanna be, interviewing Steve Albini, Janeane Garofolo, Siouxsie Sioux and others while acting as nimrod French, pretentious German, blind, deaf, mute—he's the Jerry Lewis of rock 'n' roll spoof documentaries! Great for a hard laugh, even if you're not into the music scene.

HONEYPOT—This starts off so realistically: "The story of how honey is made" that I thought it was a real industrial movie until it got bottled up, bought by a film P.A. and used on a nasty porno movie, with a few more plot twist in the life of a honey bear for good measure.

SPICE GUYS—Five beer swilling, football watching, American 'dudes' decide to start a band and go out in the desert to shoot a video that is strikingly close to the actual Spice Girl vid of whatever song it is they did out there. This short has a bunch of funny gags and is well done for its one-line joke. It must be a growing sensation because there's a website: www.spiceguys.com.

HOOF BOY—The first film by Will Keenan, lead guy in TROMEO AND JULIET and LOVE GOD, and it's really, really strange. This is no "actor-wants-to-make-jack-off-film-of-himself." Or if it is, he's going for some unusual ego stroke. Will plays a big footed guy tortured by his unruly

feet. Asian pedicurist women shriek in horror, Troma-type chicks try to be understanding but leave him in the dust as soon as he unveils his peds. Keenan has a physical, Buster Keaton-esque energy that is infectious. The editing is unlike anything I've seen before and the sound is layered, varied and inventive. Made up of many different formats and going through numerous genres, **HOOF BOY** is a schizophrenic video burp from a guy willing to make a total ass of himself. A little too long, but ultimately delivers. Great cameo by Kerri Kenny from TV's **VIVA VARIETY**, listing off all his embarrassing deformations before he asks for money for his cause to the rockin' Hoof Boy theme. Contact Midnight Monkey at 526 E 6th St #12, NYC, NY 10009.

WONDER WOMAN: BATTLE WITH THE BASHER—Made by Carra Curran and Brian Winkowski, an incredible Diana Prince look-a-like goes undercover as a leather fag to uncover the evils of a fag-bashing dude. Great mix of formats as she sees the culprit, spins behind a fireworks sparkler and emerges in a completely realistic Wonder Woman outfit, chasing down her prey. But first she stops to get a pedicure, go shopping and partake in Happy Hour drinking. Great real life reactions of people on the street watching as Wonder Woman jumps, runs in the street and stops bullets with her fab bracelets. She chases the enemy to the water, spins again and her outfit transforms into the tiniest bikini—yow! Stunt dolls and underwater trick photography are convinci... no they're not, but it's really, really funny. Ends with Diana Prince fucking the shit out of Steve Trevor in the office, who's in for a Wonder Surprise. Great use of the Wonder Woman theme song. Contact C & B Productions at 93 2nd Ave #3, NYC, NY 10003 or derhtrip@aol.com

YEAR OF THE KING—Well-made introduction to Drag King culture from Lucia Davis. Drag Kings are women who dress as men and some of these ladies are realistically hot! Great way to poke fun at macho-ism, but the good ones transcend it. Like Chico Soda, Hispanic

love god with his blow up doll or Shelly Mars, a Cobain-type grunge poet. Labio is totally Fab(-io!), Buster Hymen has got the girls screaming as he strips down to a foxy naked chick. At the end the famous Mistress Formica tells her boys, "You Kings make me feel like a Queen!" Showed with **CLUB CASANOVA** where the Drag Kings strut their stuff as cover bands! Look-a-likes of the Beatles, Kiss, Village People and The Jackson 5 were so realistic, I wouldn't have been able to tell that they were chicks! Contact Esoterik Pix at 572 Broome St #3, NYC, NY 10013 or esoterikpix@earthlink.net

A CURE FOR SERPENTS—This was one of the most interesting films that I've seen this year. It's the story of a girl who lives with her hyper-obsessive, neat freak mother. Girl tries to explain to her cute horny boyfriend why they can't have sex at her house. The girl is played by Liza Weil, who kicked ass as the star of **WHATEVER** (see review a couple columns back). The rituals to enter the house are totally meticulous, just to recreate all the motions must have been a ton of work and it's one of the creepiest things in the whole festival. Keys put in dish, pour in alcohol, shoes on the mat only, change in a special room into hospital gown and booties before scrubbing down. Mom carries 409 with her everywhere and girl has to use a special towellette when using the phone. It's so surreal, especially its stark black and white cinematography. Bringing sexuality, especially Liza's brand of pure real-girl sensual-ness, into this environment is explosive. When Liza wants to piss her mom off, she only has to open a window, but the act feels as abrasive as a strong left hook. Liza's yearning in the ultra-clean environment is a great metaphor for the power of teen sexuality and a girl's wanting to rebel. Contact Elise MacAdam at 601 West 113th Street, Apt 6F, New York, NY 10025 or ELISEMAC@interport.net

COTTON CANDY—Made by Canadians, this look at a school girl's loneliness was shot in Japan and is in Japanese with English subtitles. With very little dialogue, the film is told through the eyes of a young girl who gets

involved with the fringes of the sex industry through her school friends. The bigger context here is the isolation of capitalist Japanese culture. The girl is constantly surrounded by pornographic images of women, whether leering down from huge billboards, displayed on explicitly graphic sex TV shows or splashed on the pages of a porno mag where a girl dressed in a schoolgirl's uniform just like hers is doing nasty things as the old guy sitting across from her on the subway is trying to look up her skirt. This girl lives in a society with no boundaries and no protection for its young. She sells her underwear for cash as the man behind the counter takes an accompanying Polaroid. Eventually, she hooks up with an older Japanese businessman who takes her out and buys her nice things. The first time we see the girl smile is when he buys her a big stuffed panda. The movie culminates in a creepy scene where, back at his place, he makes her drink beer and lip sync to his slick home stereo-kareoke system of a French kids' song about lollipops in sexy adult clothes that he bought for her. The desolation in this film is devastating. Even though it's Japan, there is something very familiar about society gone awry, especially if you've ever been to L.A., with its unnatural focus on false images of women that are everywhere. Cool indie soundtrack and cameo by the band Buffalo Daughter give the film a hipster edge, but it doesn't need any, the content is powerful and heartbreaking on its own. Tinker Bell Productions, 3435 Hotel-de-Ville, Montreal, Quebec, CANADA, roshehl@total.net

Features

THE LAST BROADCAST—Winner of the Feature Silver Jury Prize. This is one of the best films I've seen in a long time. There's a lot of hype about the technology of how it was made, costing \$900, using all digital equipment: blah, blah, blah. I mean, that's great and everything but what is interesting to me is that Stefan Avalos and Lance Weiler took on the frustration that I personally feel with the growing inhumanity in the midst of over-saturated media, the hype around the Web and the Internet, the rise of tabloid television—and

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harnessed that frustration into one of the best critiques of the '90s I've ever seen on any format. The film (video) is a mockumentary about the murder of two cable access hosts, played with comic pathetic-ness by the actual directors. Desperate to get ahead and get attention for their TV show, they go out to the woods to try and track down the fabled Jersey Devil, using a psychic and a techie expert to help them broadcast live over the internet, ham radio and TV transmission. The hosts are brutally murdered and the mockumentary purports to be an expose into what happened. But as the show goes deeper into what happened, it's more about what '90s society has become. The recreation of 'reality' is amazing, I know several people who were totally fooled, thinking the movie was real. Each person interviewed is perfectly cast, every detail is perfect. The story itself is so engaging that I was on the edge of my chair, dying to know what happens next. It's so rare that I'm totally immersed in a film and I don't look at my watch. But that combined with great filmmaking skills, great content, great characters, great subtext, great overview and innovative ways to use these skills makes this a masterpiece. Only the ending lets up on the feeling of going into newly uncharted territory with a brilliant vision. The filmmakers themselves are so DIY that they are going to distribute THE LAST BROADCAST

themselves using satellite transmission to five cities simultaneously. I hope all this gee-whiz tech shit leads to a real access to get stories made and seen instead of exalting a bunch of jerk-off 'look what I did with my computer' followers who are in the inner circle of the digital revolution. If you are in one of the towns that THE LAST BROADCAST will play at, don't let all the computer hype keep you from seeing a great, great movie. Contact FFM Productions at PO Box 147, Rushall, PA 18956 or LENZZ@VOICENET.COM

SURRENDER DOROTHY—Winner of Feature Gold Jury Prize. I liked this film, but I think it hits home more with guys. It's the story of a sexually frustrated junkie whose friend comes to stay with him and starts to get sucked into his sick fantasy life—with him as the love object! It's weird that the director plays the victim in this film, but it's nice to see a film where

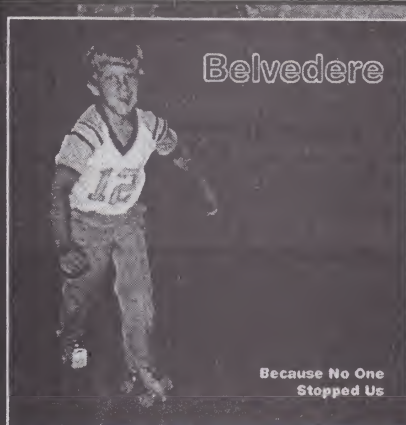
men are humiliating each other in a sexual arena instead of doing it to women. It's not a 'gay' film, however—it's too horrific. Perfectly made to scare straight men by questioning their masculinity, at the end women were laughing but men were gasping. Intense. Contact G. Rich Entertainment at 3626 Keystone Ave #2, Los Angeles, CA 90034, lantz@ucla.edu, <http://www.tlaideo.com/dorothy.htm>

WOMEN IN REVOLT—The only films at the festival this year that had really great sex scenes in them were the ones made by Paul Morrissey back in Warhol's heyday. Besides showing the lush and wonderful FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN in 3-D (which I won't review here because I missed the ending when I had to get ready to show the STAINS), CUFF honored Morrissey for Lifetime Achievement by screening this amazing, all-improved WOMEN IN REVOLT starring Candy Darling, Jackie Curtis and Holly Woodlawn. These three drag queens play women whose eyes have been opened to the wonders of women's lib. Screaming, "Men suck!" they spout feminist rhetoric and torture the men in their lives. Especially funny is the nude servant boy who Jackie sprays with deodorant when he bends over. When a man comes over to drop Candy off at Jackie's, Jackie freaks. "Take your balls and go!" "What's wrong with my genitals?" he demands to know. The girls form Politically Involved Girls (PIGS) and high drama ensues. This film is great! It's cruel, it's bitchy, a great laugh, and you get to see a man's ass like you've never seen before unless you've watched a couple of speed freaks get crazy on the couch. It's 30 years later and this film still shocks, yet you laugh so hard that you welcome it. Stunning.

I know last column I said I was gonna talk about video label Mr. Lady, but CUFF pushed it back so if you're waiting, it'll be in the next column, I promise. Send feedback to SWPchick@aol.com or P.O. Box 471807, San Francisco, CA 94147. I also do a film called MARY JANE'S NOT A VIRGIN ANYMORE which is currently on tour so check it out if it comes to your town! Or visit the website at www.sirius.com/~lenny/maryj2.html. Thanks! ©

Connect

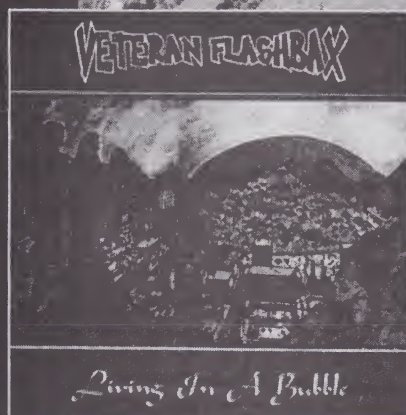
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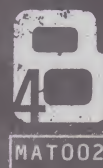
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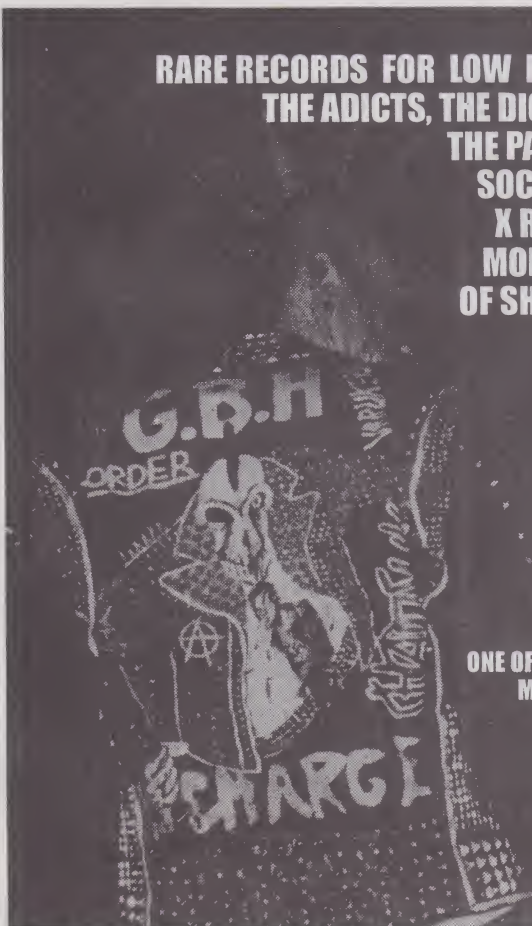


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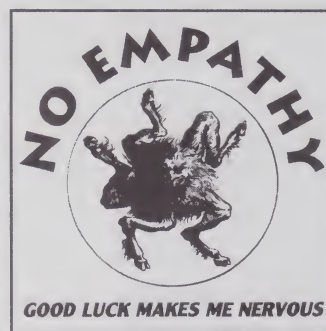
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reviewers:**

**Brain Czarnik (BC),
Brian Ryder (BR)
Dan Sinker (DS)
Eric Action (EA)
Josh Kermiet (JK)
Jason Schreurs (JS)
Kim Bae (KB)
Patti Kim (PK)
Scott MacDonald (SM)**

Fanzine Reviews

a.d.i.d.a.s. 310

Loads of info on ejaculations and vaginas and all that icky stuff. The zine lets us know who is good in the music and zine world with its reviews. The guy has good taste in music, and he gives his props to Iron Maiden. On that fact alone, you should have to buy this here zine.

(BC)

\$1.00 Brandon, 41 Wellington St., Upper, St. Catharines, Ont. Canada L2R-5P9

Age of Ideas #2

Artsy type of stories and not much more. Kinda much at 2 bucks. But if you want to read two stories and find the author amusing, then this is your bag. (BC)

\$2.00 8043 Deschutes Ct. Olympia, WA. 98501

Annexx #13

A magazine-sized newsprint music zine, with interviews, reviews, lots of ads and the whole deal. This has a fair amount of space dedicated to opinion pieces, which is cool. It also has a two-page interview with "a player," who basically describes how pimps abuse and intimidate woman into working for them. Hopefully no one will mistake this for a 'how-to' article. Interviews with Cherry Poppin' Daddies, Cretins, Atari Teenage Riot, Brand New Unit, Guttermouth. (SM)

PO Box 18475, San Antonio, TX 78218-0475
three stamps

Black Cat 131 #2

This zine comes to us from a guy named Tim Burton, and while he's most likely not the same

Tim Burton we know and love, it's a pretty uncanny name to have considering this zine's content. Black Cat 131 is a virtual cornucopia of horror and spooky related material. This issue is the Vampire issue, focusing on everything in the bloodsucker world, including reviews of cult favorite vampire films, 13 ways of becoming a vampire, how to make fake blood, a biography of Bela Lugosi, record reviews (Rocket from the Crypt, Groovie Ghoules), as well as a story about Vaid Dracula and a bunch of other cool stuff. Just about everything about this zine is great, especially the layout, which is very professional and beautiful, with lots of cool vampire clip art.

The writing is well written and informative, maybe a little short at times but still good. The werewolf issue is next, so snatch it up, it comes out bimonthly on, you guessed it, the 13th of that month. Spooky. (JK)

Tim Burton, Black Cat 131 5045 Piccadilly Dr. Mad. Wt. 53714

Boise Life #3

A little personal zine here with columns and lots of rants and raves. It has a review section along with some beauty tips. Probably the best zine in Boise! Yeah baby! (BC)

\$1.00 Brianna Lancness 3618 Tulara Dr. Boise, ID. 83706

Chassis #1

WOW, the nice lady on this comic book's cover has two big Chassis! Chassis is the story of a beautiful red headed race car driver that lives in this retro 40's world. The comic is full of cool cars, action, and chassis! Some dude called it the Jetson's of the 90's! The back section has a letters column and overall the comic is first rate. See ya in the pit! (BC)

\$2.95 Hurricane Comics 11054 Ventura Blvd., Suite 117, Studio City, CA. 91604

Constant Agitation #5

CA is a quick-reading (or looking) zine, filled mostly with photos taken by the editor at shows in his hometown of Ann Arbor. Most of the bands featured (Nadsat Nation, Mazinga, the Brewts, Blue Onion, etc.) are local (the Muffs and Groove Ghoules are the out-of-towners), and tidbits about each are included next to the photos. (JVS)
\$1; P.O. Box 1582, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1582

Demon Speak

Printed on very nice paper with a glossy cover, this is a collection of poetry and prose that Jack has read during soundchecks for his band, Hand over Fist. Some of it really isn't too bad, given that it is, after all, poetry. Unfortunately, there is no contact address to be found in these pages. (JVS)
\$2; S. Jack Silman, (803) 695-9729

Doo Wrong #1

This zine is put together by a small group of high schoolers from rural Ohio, and the sense of humor betrays their age. Hardcore band Withhold and ska band OB1 are both interviewed, revealing nothing of interest about either band. A guide to massage is a welcome inclusion, and a Mr.T coloring contest is cute, but the rest of the zine would mostly appeal to locals and their friends. The centerfold (a rip-off of the inside cover of the last Promise Ring album) is pretty hilarious. (JVS)
three stamps; Ken, 2194 Glenside Avenue, Norwood, OH 45212

Duhhh #9

It's the romance issue, and it's got a bunch of

great columns by people who share their vision of what it all means. Interviews with Cavity, 16, and Noothgrush. Reviews. Photos of bands. It's all designed well, too. Recommended. (SM)

Anthony P.O. Box 47, Bradford, BD8 7TX, UK \$2

Double Decker #2

DD, were it to be judged objectively, would be just another newsprint punk zine, if not more ripe with typos than the rest. However, Double Decker appears to serve a function: it obviously has the intent and potential to unite the Leigh Valley punk scene in Pennsylvania. The editor is the co-owner of a record store with the same name as the zine, and a lot of the content is locally-focused. Success comes in the fact that the publication still remains of interest to those outside their locality. Digger, Dropkick Murphys, Seein' Red, Agnostic Front, and Devola are interviewed. (JVS)

\$1; Amy Pursel, 803 Saint John Street, Allentown, PA 18103

Fracture #3



Fracture is a very well pretty well done punk r indie zine filled with a shit load of columns and interviews and reviews. This issue features interviews with various bands such as Zoinks!, Refused, Karate, broccoli In Japan and a few others. The writing in the columns is pretty well done, and the interviews ask good questions. One thing I really liked about this zine's album review section was that it shows pictures of all the covers of the albums that are being reviewed, which is a real good idea. Nice stuff. (JK)

Fracture, PO box 623 Cardiff, CF3 9ZA Wale, UK free

Generation Why? #2

Put out by a girl names Emily who is definitely sXe. In this pub you'll get Gwen Stefani loathing (and rightfully so), some poetry, general lefty thinkin', nifty bric-a-brac, animal rights, flag bashing, etc. I think this girl has a good head on her shoulders, HOWEVER, seeing her name appear as "xEmilyx" 17(!) times in a 24-page zine strikes me as a wee bit redundant. (PK)

\$1 ppd. OR trade; PO Box 143, Newfane VT, 05345

Global Mail #18

Global Mail is a cross-cultural, cross-media listing of all kinds of art projects, exchanges, collaborations, and mail art events. It comes out three times a year in January, May, and September. And yes, I stole that right from the intro of this neat-o resource guide for all sorts of things off the beaten track. A little on the thin side, but definitely good to know about. (PK)

\$3; Global Mail, Grove City Factory Stores, PO Box 1309, Grove City PA, 16127

<http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/cafe/2550>

Han Gin Glik Eahex #10

Brutal Truth, Tortoise, No Reason and more are all covered her in this issue. Reviews, columns, and all your basic zine stuff. This one is full and done in that newsprint that leaves you with an inky present after you are through reading it. (BC)

\$1.00 Hanging Like A Hex 201 Maple Ln. N. Syracuse, NY. 13212

It's Raining Truths #2

The long, thin size of IRT is very appealing to this reader, and the page layout inside only compliments that fact. Inside, Pytrik takes issue with religion in hardcore, offers up pieces of his diary, and interviews Driven, 97a and Palatka (which is especially interesting, as it gives Kurt's feelings on living in Holland for a time). One of the most piercing articles is an essay about Pytrik's feelings about sexual freedom and sexual misconduct; his feelings are right on. Zine reviews are included, as well. (JVS)

\$3; Pytrik, Topaas 1, 5231 KL Den Bosch, THE NETHERLANDS

The J of S #1

Apparently the title stands for "the Journal of Sentiment," whereas one would assume otherwise. The zine comes across as an intelligent, personal/political outlet for a small group of young people in Canada, and succeeds on numerous levels. School is analyzed as the pseudo-prison that it is; sexual objectification and animal dissection are also topics. The interview with John K. Samson of the Weakerthans is fitting in this publication, and the only questionable inclusion is an interview with George Tabb of the band Furious George. Features a nice two-color cover. (JVS)

\$1.50; Dallas, P.O. Box 35078, Edmonton, AB T5K 2R8, CANADA

Joys of Lawn Care #?

A very disjointed collection of random drawings, photos and pieces of prose. It's interesting to look at, sorta, but I got nothing out of it. Just too

cryptic. But they did have one cool idea: attach two mini-zines to the center of the zine with the staples. (SM)

P.O. Box 944, San Mateo, CA 94403 \$1

Limousine #6

Libby's zine is personal, focusing on her move back to the San Francisco area after a year spent a few hours south in San Louis Obispo. She reflects on friends, panic attacks, her long-term relationship with her boyfriend, and issues of her gender. A story about a friend of hers who is a male prostitute with mental problems is thought-provoking, and a letter written to her deceased father ends this zine on a tear-inducing yet hopeful note. Libby creates something genuine in Limousine. (JVS)

\$2; Libby, P.O. Box 11, San Mateo, CA 94401-0011

Lollipop #44

This is the tenth anniversary Issue of this Boring Jack off music magazine that seems to take itself way too seriously. Interviews with the Donnas, Jesus Lizard, Amazing Royal Crowns and some other bland reviews and stories compose this wanna be rolling stone crap punk magazine. The world would be a better place if there weren't any-

more of these pointless whiny rock critic magazines to clutter the lives and minds of our nations youth. (JK)

Lollipop magazine, PO box 441493 Boston, MA 02144 \$ 4.95

The Long Walk Nowhere

The first part of this comic is a pretty accurate description of life as a gawky insecure teenage hesh. I'm sure we all knew somebody like the main character or were the main character at one point in time. The drawings are very clear and are exceedingly well-paced. The story is kind of - not sad but something close to it, pathetic maybe. The 2nd part is about being a bit older and more mature. It has a much more somber, resigned, almost helpless kind of tone to the narrative and the pictures. The narrator takes us on a walk around the hometown where he grew up and still lives. Kind of depressing. Overall very well-drawn, well-paced, and well-delivered. Note the new address. (KB)

\$2 Migraine PO Box 673 Portland, OR 97207

Luhey's Fairy Tale

By a rather curious T.R. Miller. A pocket-sized zine that reads like little bizarre postcards. Crazy comics and pooches abound, interjected with Mr. Miller's thoughts on Luhey. Certainly interesting. (PK)

25¢; PO Box 234, Milltown NJ, 08850-0234

Luhey's Regards To Zineland!

Luhey is apparently leaving zineland and is very sad. Luhey is a scary-looking cartoon dog with what looks to be a bad case of acne. Luhey says the word "zine" an awful lot in this zine. Zine zine zine. Ergh. (PK)

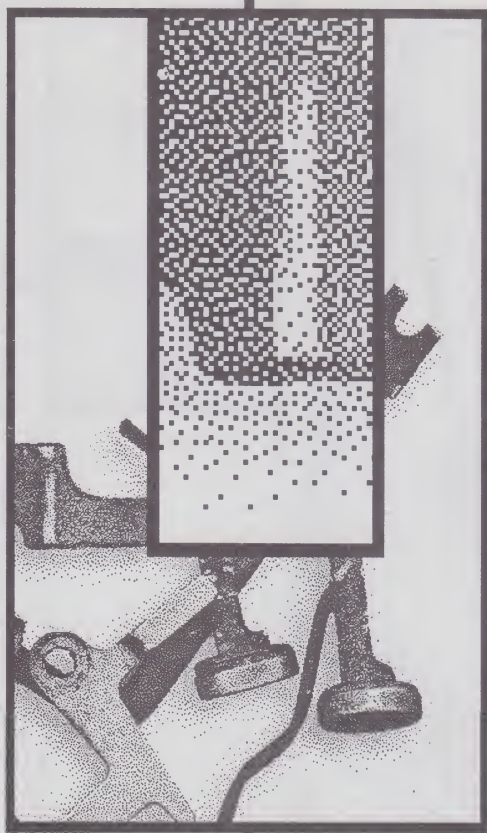
(same ordering info as above)

Meathead #1

This cool debut issue lets us know what it really means to be Irish-American. And also an article on Fecal Bacteria in Indiana's water system. And to close it out, there is talk about L.S.D. (BC)

A stamp Keetah 932 1/2 Ransom Ln. Bloomington, IN. 47403

Mermaid #1



James Kochaka must be a really busy guy because this is like the third comic I've gotten from him this month. This is not a bad thing though, because Mr. Kochalka creates some of the most enjoyable little comics I've read in a while, and Mermaid is no exception.

Mermaid focuses upon the a family vacation of two weird characters who's kids are a robot and a talking cat. The story gets weird when the robot sees a mermaid swimming in the water below their boat and later falls into the ocean looking for her. As with all of James Kochalka's stories, Mermaid is told in a dream like, stream of consciousness way that creates a feeling not many comics have. There is a whimsical air of loneliness captured in Mermaid that exists in a way I have not seen it presented before. Highly recommended. (JK)

Alternative Press Inc., 611 NW 34th Dr., Gainesville FL 32607-2429 \$2.95

Midget Breakdancing Digest #8

Another zine with a huge press run, where every three pages or so is a plea for contributors. Standard columns, reviews, and shallow interviews (with Pinhead Circus, the Suicide Machines, and Muckafurgason). In effect, MBD mimics plenty of other music-intensive zines that have come before it. This reviewer's advice to all zines of this ilk: drop the huge press run and end the focus on acquiring outside contributors. The editor's own work would prove much more interesting, and the world has enough Punk Planet and MRR-style publications as things stand. (JVS)

\$1; 3032 McIntosh Dr., Longmont, CO 80503

A Million Monkeys #1

Despite some rather painfully obvious attempts to write like Kurt Vonnegut, A Million Monkeys is a pretty well done personal zine. Focusing mostly on the pain and isolation the author feels during his first year of college, A Million Monkeys captures well the pain that many feel being alone, be it away at school or home in their own bedroom. Along with the stories of college life, A million monkeys also features a well done essay about The Nation of Ulysses and the Make up, as well as some band photos and a mock letter to the Sprite corporation complaining about not being able to buy phony Jooky Soda in stores. While A million monkeys may not be the greatest zine in the world, it makes a decent effort to be interesting, and I'll give it points for that. A Pretty Decent read. (JK)

A Million Monkeys, Box 492 Hudson, IL 61748

Narcolepsy Press #6

This issue of narcolepsy press features an expose on oft forgotten Supremes" legend Florence Ballard, as well as a run down of the ten best Japanese electric guitar players of all time. Also included are the usual review's of zines and records, and an Alyssa Milano look alike contest. I really liked this zine, and found it very humorous and entertaining. Nothing too revolutionary but a good read all around. I found the Florance Ballard story especially Interesting. I never realized what a bitch Diana Ross really is. Good stuff. (JK)

Narcolepsy Press, PO box 18624 Anaheim, CA 92817 \$1.00

Nervous Condition #2/ Scenery 38

These personal zines and essays are what the zine world is all about. Forget about today's glossy looking zine full of major label wannabes. Get yourself a personal little zine and read about someone else's life.

And then feel good or bad about your own life. Isn't that what's it is all about? (BC)

\$1.00 N.C./S P.O. Box 14223 Gainesville, FL 32604

Off My Jammy #10

I've said R before and I'll say R again: I like this zine. Off my Jammy feature some @@of the coolest Interviews with some of the coolest bands around. Each issue has a different theme, this issue being weddings, and all the Interviews ask questions about that subject. In this issue, wedding questions are posed to a wide variety of bands including Ben Folds Five, Buffalo Daughter, John Doe, Green Day, Jack Drag, Pastilia, Tribe 8 and Union 13. Along with interviews, this issue also features an alternative museum guide and a selection of celebrity wedding sightings. Good Time Read. Recommended. (JK)

Off my Jammy, PO box 440422, W.Somerville, MA 02144 hmm, send a couple stamps I guess.

OneOff #2

Frank is a very angry "working class" Irishman, and the grief in his introduction bordered on cliché, but luckily the aggression was worked out of his system for the rest of the zine. Interviews with Neurosis, Cheapskate and Rejected pose interesting questions, but an interview with Henry

Rollins (who the editor openly adores) shows Henry offering only one sentence answers to every question (which Frank praises as Henry being "straight to the point"). Record reviews and rants are more interesting than usual given the editor's vernacular. Comes with a CD featuring Irish bands Striknien D.C., Gout, Feeney, Waltons, and Steam Pig. (JVS) \$6; P.O. Box 5468, Crumlin, Dublin 12, IRELAND

Piece of Dump #1

Fancy graphic design programs can make the stuff in your zine look good. But if the stuff in it isn't good to begin with, your zine still sucks. This zine is an excellent example of that principle. The boring interviews and uninspired columns are no better because of the fancy layout. This has interviews with Help Fanzine, Second Chance and Atari, a band that said to improve the hardcore scene "more chicks need to start wearing sexier clothing." (SM)

2447 Winterwood Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89122 \$1

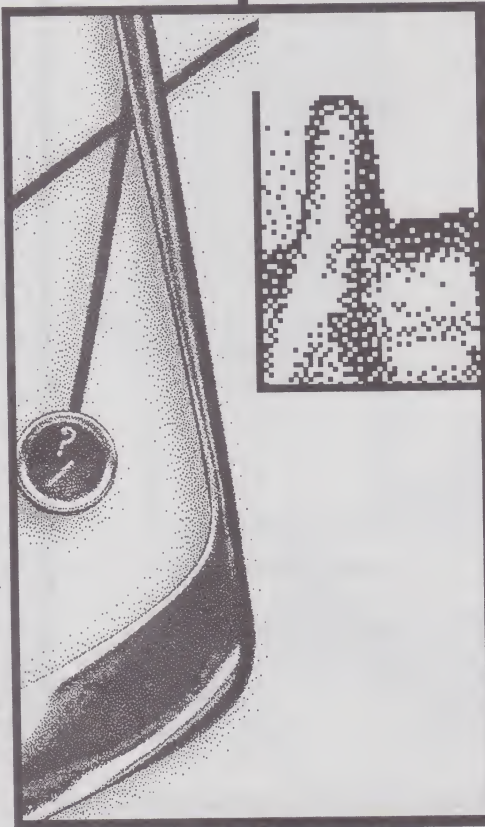
Pissing in the Ocean #1

Bobby puts it all on the line here with his rants about Flagstaff, AZ. This full size zine has its book reviews, journals, and interviews, but the meat of it is in the Flagstaff reviews. I kind of liked the place (along with its Misfit type cover band) when I was there 2 years ago, but then again, I don't live there. But you can hear all about it in this issue. (BC)

\$1.00 bobby P.O. Box 21012 Flagstaff, AZ 86061

Quit Your Job, #1

Quit your job is a comic book, by James Kochalka, author of various weird little comics such as Mermaid(also reviewed in this issue)and a few other ones I can't think of right off the bat. Quit Your Job is the story of a Young man who one day just decides he doesn't want to go to work. The story follows he and his cat's adventures throughout the course of the day, which involve finding a magic ring and having his cat chosen to be the first kitty in space. James Kochalka's black and white line artwork is very simple and effective and accompany his stories very well. The story follows a very stream of consciousness, dream like logic and structure, and at times is almost surreal. Despite this, the story flows very naturally and never causes you to question the leaps in logic, accomplishing what many many such comics try to do, but just end up becoming confusing messes that



make no sense. Quit your Job is more of a little story book than an actual comic and the layout is very n@ done with a color cover and good paper quality. I am constantly impressed by the Alternative Press comics I got to review, and this one is no different. Highly recommended. (JK)

Alternative Press Inc. 611 NW 34th Drive, Gainesville, FL 32607-2429 \$6.95

Residue #4

Pretty funny collection of comics with art slightly reminiscent of old Zap comics. Offering fairly accurate social commentary on the state of America today. I don't usually like politically motivated comics, but these are better than most, and I enjoyed reading this a lot. Very nicely done. (JK)

R.Lootine PO box 580848 Minneapolis, MN 55458 \$2.00

Rivet #12

Here's an anthology of sorts, edited by one of my fellow zinesters right here in Toronto—Stacey Case. He is the swella fella who periodically puts on the always interesting Cut 'n' Paste zine fairs in our humble city. Rivet features a variety of comics and articles contributed by many a different folk. In this issue we've got comics galore, DIY screen printing, How to Build A Potato Gun, old school TO punk scene, music/film reviews, and funny love letters of yesteryear. A little something for everybody. (PK)

\$2; 689 Queen St. W, Toronto ON, M6J 1E6 Canada

Sap #3

The 3rd and final in the Sap comic series - a tale of punk rock love. It's drawn by Simon Gane of arnie.fanzine in his particular chunky style and the story is written by Kim of Fern fanzine and Ian from Migraine. It's a somewhat poignant story (conclusion of a story) of 2 characters that always run into each other but can't seem to get up the guts to talk to one another - a situation pretty much anybody could probably relate to. The frames are well-drawn and paced, really capturing moments and pauses in a realistic perspective. A top quality comic. (KB)

\$2 Migraine PO Box 673 Portland, OR 97207

Second Nature #7

This magazine is fully enjoyable. A great layout, quality photographs, and subject matter that you actually might care about. Let's start off with the great interview with Atom And His Package. Yeah, I know, last year you thought he was a dork but now you think he's great since you have seen him at all the fests. Atom, You rock! Chicago's Braid also does a good interview, which includes words of opinion on each release of their discography. I wish more bands would do that. I really could go on with praise until I hit every article. Further mentions include a Cave In interview, some truthful gossip about relations between certain bands and a certain label, and more. A magazine where you might actually look at the records reviews last. (SY)

Second Nature, PO BOX 11543, Kansas City, MO 64138

The Secret Mystery Files of Captain Sissy #3

Woah! There's a lot of Kooky stuff in this zine. Much respect to the kids who put this thing together. This issue is packed with tons of stuff including, but not limited to, a story about being in Washington DC on the 4th of July, an expose on the hidden cultural and moral agenda of romance novels, an article on prison fights, an interview with prison activist Eli Rosenblatt, a story about Hardcore kids work ethic, a article on Proto-Riot grrl Natty Gann and a bunch of other really interesting and well written articles and stories. I was very impressed by this zine, not just for

it's humorous exposes, but mostly for it's very smart and well written political articles, many of which are very inspiring. This zine captures a lot of what a good zine should be, creative, smart and better than mainstream magazines with a good mix of materials and ideas.

Highly recommended. (JK)

The Secret Mystery Files of Captain Sissy, PO box 4493 Ann Arbor, MI, 48106 \$2.00

Slow Poke #1

Slow Poke is a trippy little collection of really nicely drawn black and white comic I didn't really find the comics very funny, a lot of them seem funny in a very Sunday Funnies kind of way, which is not bad, but just doesn't make me laugh. While the humor wasn't quite up my alley, the artwork is very nice, and reminds me a little bit of old Black and white Warner Brothers cartoons, or maybe a little Chris Wars. All in all, a nice little comic, and worth checking out. (JK)

No address. all I know is that R's \$2.00 and is by Jen Sorensen

Slut #54

A collection of short essays on things that aren't very interesting. There's a two-page assessment on the state of pants (the garment), as well as bits on punctuation, a funeral, state troopers, giving bums change, and Canada mania. Reviews and a short interview with Sonic Youth also are included. Blah. (SM)

41 Cornbury Court, Woings Mills, MD, 21117

South Chicago ARA Alert #1

This is the publication of the South Chicago Anti-Racist Action group, and it's packed with stuff. Much of it is newspaper clippings dealing with racism (like the guys in Texas who dragged a black man to his death). But there are other substantial pieces on race and race relations, as well as contacts and other useful things. A good effort for a great cause. (SM)

P.O. Box 721, Homewood, IL 60430 \$?

Steinbeck Salinas Murder Report #4

A thrown-together cut and paste deal, made up mostly of clippings from the local newspaper about murders and shootings and stuff. It's a very small zine—three inches wide by two tall—and has a few photos strewn throughout. I guess the idea is to get something in the mail every month. I'd rather just have something with substance once a year. (SM)

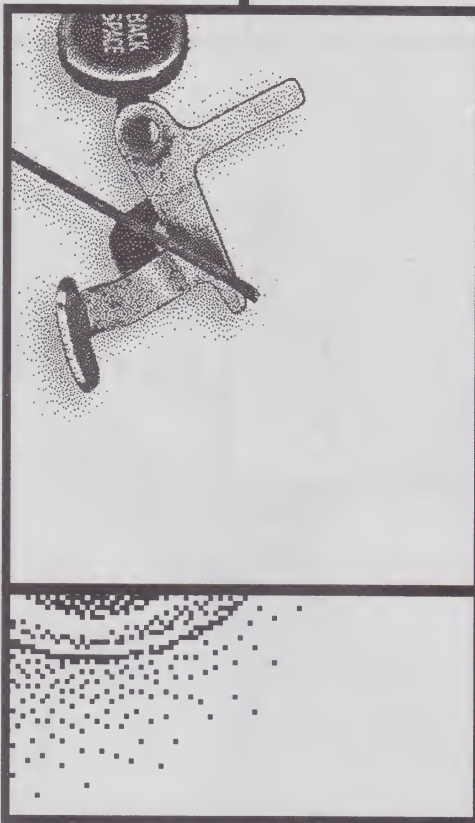
P.O. Box 853, Castroville, CA 95012 \$2/one year subscription (12 issues)

Stop Breathing #6

Ok, if you took Punk Planet and took away all the political articles and stuff about punk

society and put in a bunch of articles about indie bands like Superchunk and Pavement you have an issue of Stop Breathing. The layout is almost identical to PP and the interviews are very comprehensive and well done, much as most PP interviews are. This is a really good little magazine, and while it isn't quite as thick as PP, it is still packed with a lot of stuff. This issue features interviews with the aforementioned Pavement and Superchunk, as well as interviews with Mary Lou Lord, Son Volt's Jay Farrar and Joan of Arc. Along with the usual reviews and stuff, there is also an expose on No Depression magazine, a good alternative country magazine. While this magazine may be a little too mainstream for some of the hardcore indie people out there, I liked it a lot, and would recommend it to anyone who likes PP. (JK)

Stop Breathing, PO box 1156 Simi Valley, CA 93062 \$2.95



Stop Smiling #7

This rules. A big, thick professional-looking magazine with a glossy color cover and a bunch of fun stuff inside. There's so much I didn't get to read it all (yet). It's the "belated love" issue, and comes with a special "Love and Relationship for Dummy's" section, modeled after those ceaseless "... for Dummies" books that litter computer sections in book stores. It's pretty funny. Fiction, true stories, stuff on Star Wars, a bunch of stuff on UFOs including a guide to the Freedom of Information Act which centers around an attempt to get the goods on flying saucers. Interviews with The Notwist, Helium, Quasi, Beatnik Filmstars, the Make Up, the author of a sex book, The Apples, and a dominatrix. Also, 150 record reviews. It's a double issue (160 pages), and the first 2,000 come with a Silver Jews 7". Yay. (SM)

P.O. Box 2038, Darien, IL 60561 \$6 w/record, \$5 without

Surreptitious #8

Zines as a form of therapy are often a double-edged sword for both the writer and the reader it seems. For me, this sort of thing is deliciously captivating yet bizarre to think about how much you can potentially glean about a total stranger out there. The impact is great. And Sprout has the brave ability to share some rather saucy stories with his audience. Boys who cry "faggot", a most unsavory houseguest, adultery out the wahoo, and more. Rumour has it that Surreptitious and "doing one's business" go hand in hand. Just don't forget to wipe. (PK)

\$1 or trade; PO Box 11751, Eugene OR, 97440

Tail Spins # 31

Tail Spins is one big ol thick monster of a zine, with lots of small print. This is kind of annoying, but I'll let it go because most of that small text was worth reading. The format of Tail spins basically follows your average, reviews, band interviews format, but is are some sorta weird stuff thrown in like a 24 page conspiracy expose about the Kennedy Assassination that reads like an Oliver Stone textbook, and a story about Phrenology (the science of reading someone's personality by the shape of their head). I actually think this would have been a much better zine if they had more weird shit and less lame band interviews and record reviews. This is not to say that the music stuff isn't good, it's just not very original. The one thing I did like about the record review section was their confidence in reviewing something like Madonna's new CD next to something like Pussy Galore. It's good to see that kind of variety, but. All in all, still a pretty average zine. (JK)

Tail Spins, PO box 1860 Evanston, IL 6024 \$ 3.00

Taste it! #4

Great graphics and a cool page of stickers came for us insiders of the trade. But for you the average Joe, you get nicely done articles and rants and raves. You get advice on how to climb the corporate ladder. You get theology. And you need to get it fast as there are limited copies left. (BC)

\$1.00 803 Douglas Ave #13, Mpls. MN. 55403

Thank You For Using AT&T

With a sub-heading of "How to Turn A Common [sic] Electronic Device Into Your Ticket to Free Long Distance", that pretty much sums it up. This is conveniently sneaky-sized, and the text itself is like a piece of art. Fuck shit up, yeah. (PK)

\$2; Leslie James, PO Box 257546, Chicago IL, 60625

Third Arm Electricity #12

Another groovy pocketzine that will either infuriate or amuse depending on where you're coming from. Will Meek is one funny kid who will freestyle you to the grave. Tons of tongue-in-cheek anecdotes, as well as a good dose of "real life" fucked-upness. This boy simple looves June of 44, heel! This was a good front-to-end, juice 'n' chips kinda read. (PK)

2 stamps OR 50¢; PO Box 41393, Brecksville OH, 44141

Triple Dare #1

Triple Dare contains three new short comic stories by three different Alternative Press artists, Tom Hart, James Kochalka and Jon Lewis. Tom Hart turns in a strange little tale about a family with a ghost that forces them to cook for him. James Kochalka's story is as surreal as usual, focusing -on a guy and a cat and their conversation about -rain. Jon Lewis puts in a hilarious story about a guy who goes always takes his dates to a dinner where he knows an old homeless man will ask them N they are in love. The only artist of these three I was familiar with before reading this was James Kochalka, but all three artists are great and my only wish is that the stories were longer. Along with the three stories inside there is also a short one page comic by Steve Weissman on the back cover. Overall, this comic would serve as a good introduction to anyone interested in Alternative Press comic artists. I

highly recommend checking this out. (JK)
Alternative Press Inc., 611 NW 34th drive, Gainesville FL 32607 \$2.95

The Trouble With Normal #34

If this wasn't so thrown-together, it could be decent. Interviews with Lynnard's Innards, Chumbawumba, Eugene Chadbourne and Servotron. Live reviews. That's it. Cut and paste and put together all haphazard. The Chumbawumba interview was good and will be continued next issue. Servotron was amusing. Did I mention the layout sucks? (SM)

P.O. Box 329, Columbia, MOO 65205-0329 \$1

Two Shy French Teenagers

Many moons ago I had the pleasure of reviewing a zine called Ol Junie Blue Eyes. It came in a barf bag—thankfully without any regurgitated corn niblets—and was pretty cool. This new zine/art project could be seen as a follow-up of sorts to OJBE. Except the goodies this time around come in a special folder...the Gabe File for the Gabe-philis, if you will. Introspection, imagination, and a special little something that makes this one stand out. My favourite is the spaceships story—I hear ya boy. Good humour and honesty keep this party going strong. Dig the ghostie motif. (PK)
\$? (something cool); 591 Desha, Memphis TN, 38117

Yikes! #2

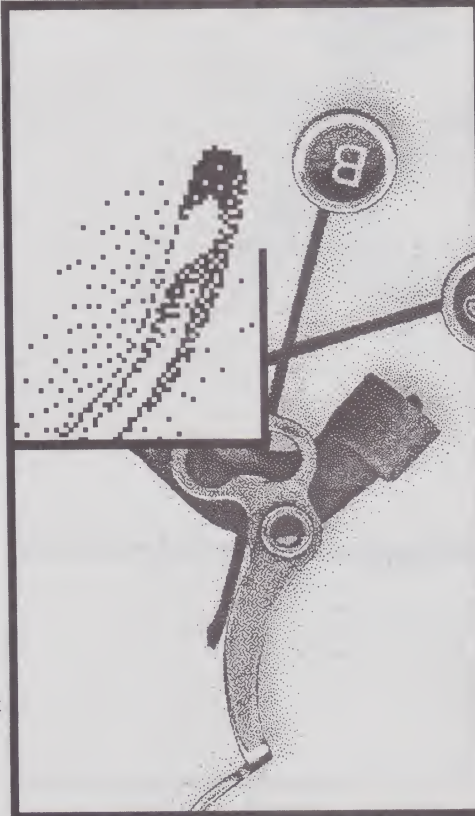
Steve Weissman brings us more wacky surreal adventures of his gang of young monsters in this, the second issue of Yikes comics. In this issue, Lil' Bloody and Kid Medusa are forced to play together because all the other kids have chicken pox, and the story of the X-mas Creezus on Secret Island is revealed to everyone. I liked the first issue of Yikes! and I like this one as well. The stories are wacky and bizarre and the art is nifty and colorful just like a comic should be. If you have never seen S.Weissmans work before, I highly recommend checking this out. (JK)

Alternative Press Inc., 611 NW 34th DR., Gainesville FL 32607-2429 \$2.95

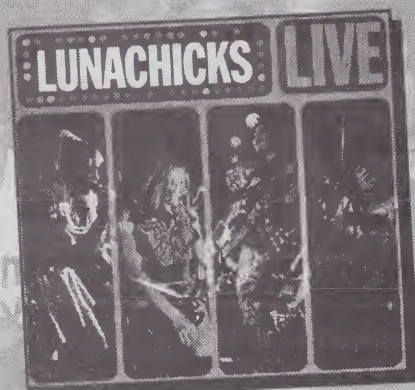
Yuma #3

John's wordy-yet-flowing style of writing makes this an enjoyable personal zine. He tells tales of his trip as a roadie with From Ashes Rise and Serotonin, and interviews (Nashville) local Dave Cloud about his thirty years of history playing in bands. Even the fictional short story that closes the zine does not bore, and in fact is quite rewarding. (JVS)

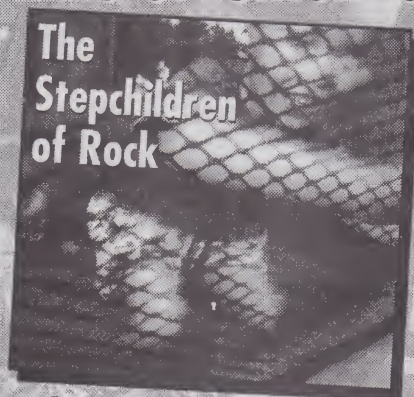
\$1; John H., 727 McGraw St., Clarksville, TN 37040



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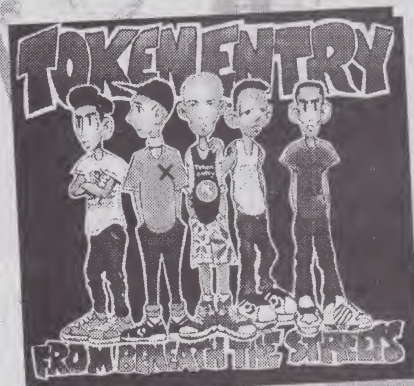
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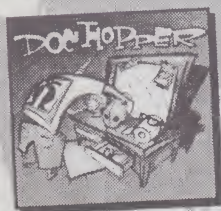


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This is a 2 hour live video zine in VHS format
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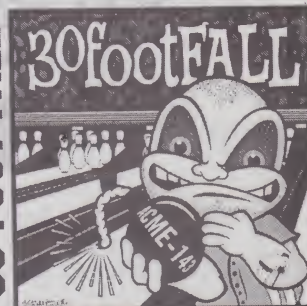
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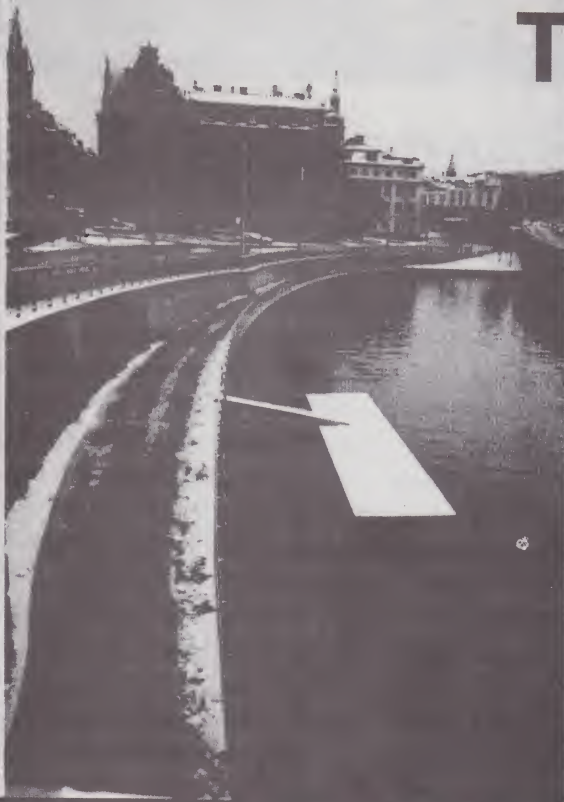
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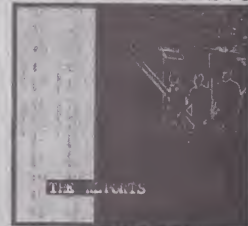
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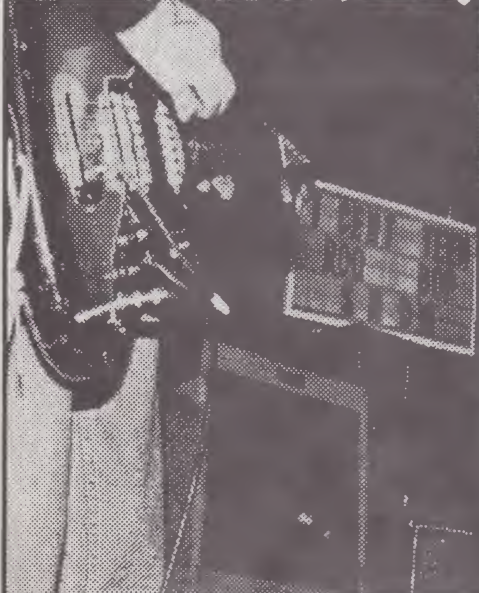
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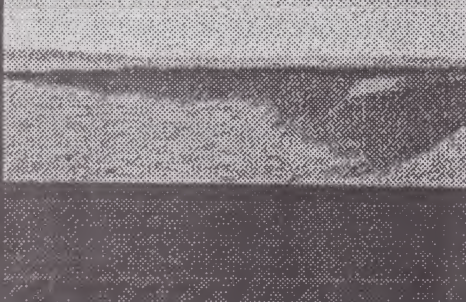
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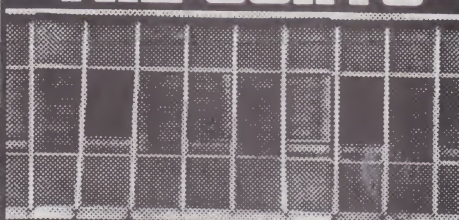


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BY JOHN BRADY

MAPPING THE BEAT: POPULAR MUSIC AND CONTEMPORARY THEORY

THOMAS SWISS, JOHN SLOOP, ANDREW HERMAN
MALDEN: BLACKWELL, 1998
322 PGS.

Space is sexy. Not outer space, although that's quite popular, too. No, the space that's "in" at the moment is the space we move through in everyday life: the urban space we travel through on the way to work; the public space that is the stage for our political protests; and the space of cultural consumption we inhabit every time we get some new vinyl in our hot little hands. Such space has increasingly become the object of political and academic activity. Political activists, for example, struggle to preserve public spaces like parks from the ravenous encroachment of private corporations, while cultural activists fight to carve out spaces for new sounds and new art. Not to be left behind, academics have started to think more and more about such political and cultural activity, pondering the critical and democratic potential of this politics of space.

The contributors to the new collection of essays on rock, punk and popular music, *Mapping the Beat: Popular Music and Contemporary Theory* also find space appealing, specifically the space that music occupies in our daily lives. In the book's 15 essays, the contributors map the different "locations of and routes for the creation of

popular music and the spaces they open for transformation and flight." This mapping results in a fairly eclectic mix of essays ranging from a consideration of repetition in hip-hop, to an analysis of the queer punk politics of bands like Tribe 8 and Pansy Division to a look at the legal wrangling surrounding Negativland's *The Letter U and the Numeral 2*. At times deliciously entertaining and extremely insightful, these essays are also at times filled with much too much academic blah-blah-blah and useless, pretentious jargon. Such avoidable faults aside, *Mapping the Beat* is indeed a thought provoking volume and is valuable for anyone interested in applying the tools of cutting edge social and political theory to popular music.

To my mind, one of the more thought provoking aspects of the book is how the essays explore music as a form of communication. As the editors note in their introductory essay, we all know that "everything in the world of pop music is a commodity," but this knowledge doesn't tell us how individuals use music and the power of noise to produce meaning in their lives and communicate this to others. Along this line, the essays in *Mapping the Beat* analyze how bands and their listeners deploy music to create identities, engage in cultural resistance and attempt to form communities of sound.

To their credit, the essays don't just look at the positive ways that music operates in

daily life, they also look at the way it can be used to marginalize and exclude certain groups of people. In this respect, Norma Coates's essay "Can't We Just Talk About Music?: Rock and Gender on the Internet" is exemplary. In a sarcastic, biting piece, she takes rock and roll culture to task for systematically trivializing or simply ignoring the contributions of women to the world of rock music.

There are, of course, dangers in examining popular music as a form of communication. One danger is exaggerating the power of music to affect significant social change and fight the powers that be. Almost all of the essays in *Mapping the Beat* fall into this trap at one time or another. Music certainly can be powerful. But what exactly is the nature of its power? When music does contribute to political change, how long lasting are the changes? Questions like these are not systematically addressed by the authors and as a result their assessments of the political power of music tend to be overly optimistic and somewhat naive.

The second danger in reading music as communication is the uncritical acceptance of the message in the medium, to briefly distort Marshall McLuhan. The essays revel in music's ability to produce new, hybrid forms of community, but all too often they leave the exact nature of these communities unexamined. Steve Waksman's essay "Kick Out the Jams!: The MC5 and the Politics of Noise," is an example of where a more critical stance toward

the subject matter is needed. In an entertaining essay that presents a sophisticated portrait of Detroit's late 60's music scene, Waksman traces the role the MC5 played in the city's rock and roll subculture. Cultural revolutionaries, the MC5 challenged the prevailing order with, in Waksman's view, the "restless noise of youth." Waksman sees in Rob Tyner's screams of 'Kick out the Jams, Motherfucker!' an impulse toward a new "sensual politics," one that would "rid the body of its civilized trappings and return it to a purity of sensation that had long been lost."

Exciting stuff. But we shouldn't take such a sensual politics at face value and accept it as something desirable and positive, a move Waksman, I think, makes. There isn't anything necessarily positive about calling for a return to a purer state of existence after the walls of civilization have been torn down. Indeed, such calls have been regular tools in the rhetorical repertoire of radical right movements in modern politics. This isn't to suggest that the MC5 were Fascists—they weren't. It is only to suggest that we need to take a more critical stance toward the types of communities and political projects bands contribute to with their music.

Perhaps the most interesting essays in the book are those that don't deal directly with music, but instead concentrate on how the production and communication of cultural meaning in music is organized by corporations, the market and the state. Here the essays by David Sanjek and Holly

Kruse stand out. In their respective essays, the authors focus on the role played by corporate strategies and state policy in the world of popular music. They demonstrate that democratizing the media and popular culture can't be achieved just by starting up new labels, but must involve significant legal reform and new directions in state policy. By analyzing the structures of power and profit that influence what the public sees and hears, Sanjek and Kruse provide a useful counterpoint to the book's other essays that explore how people use music 'in the streets.'

Ultimately, I think it is the combination of these two types of essays that makes *Mapping the Beat* a worthwhile book. By featuring essays that examine both how people use music in their daily lives and how people in positions of cultural and political power attempt to direct such use, *Mapping the Beat* reminds us that we need to look at both sides of the culture industry equation. We need, of course, to look at how corporations and those with the cash produce and distribute popular music. But if we are to fully grasp popular music's place in society, we also need to look at how the people who listen and buy music attempt, for better or worse, to live the music and map the beat in everyday life. ©



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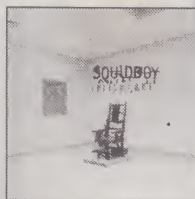


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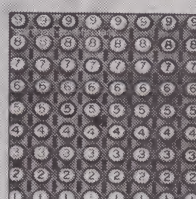
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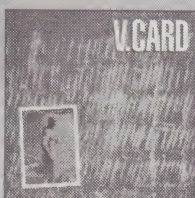
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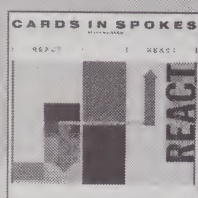
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PP22 Our first issue with a full-color cover! Author Annalee Newitz went undercover as a boy to cover the Christian men's movement, The Promise Keepers. Plus interviews with Ray & Porcell of Shelter/Youth of Today, Punk legend Exene Cervenka, Gern Blandsten Record's Charles Maggio, Ovarian Trolley, & Burning Airlines, as well as author Stewart Home. Pansy Division tour diary. And PP gets into the ring with Incredibly Strange Wrestling. 168 pgs.

PP23 Chumbawamba: Have they been able to successfully subvert the mainstream for their own political agenda or have they—like so many bands before them—succumbed to capital's lies? Also inside

are interviews with Gearhead Fanzine's Mike Lavella, Loveitt Records, Subterranean Distribution, The Van Pelt, and The Young Pioneers. Articles on the Pirate Radio movement, one person's experiences going from being a singer in a punk band to being an outreach worker for homeless youth, guerrilla posterizing and the recent controversies surrounding the Teamsters. Plus there's everything else you like! 154 pgs

PP24 The Art & Design issue. Featuring tons of interviews with punk artists both well known to the not-so-well-known, PP24 attempts to paint a picture (no pun intended) of the current state of art and punk by talking to the people doing it. Interviewed in this issue are comic activist Seth Tobokman, designers Art Chantry and House Industries, photographers Cynthia Connolly, Chrissie Piper and Paul Drake and tattoo artist Kim Saigh. Articles about the poster art of Frank Kozik, state subsidizing of the arts, the current state of radical art, and design in the underground. 164 pgs. multiple covers no longer available

PP25 Punk Planet looks at the growing girl skate underground in a 20 page section. Also in this issue are interviews with Spazz, DeSoto Records, The World Inferno Friendship Society and By The Grace of God's Duncan Barlow explains why he's retiring from the hardcore scene. Plus a talk with Outpunk's Matt Wobensmith about why he's stopping his seminal zine & label. Articles on spoken word & 25 years of Choice. Plus, PP25 looks at the real reasons the Clinton administration wants to go back to Iraq. 144 pgs

PP26 Steve Albini, the guy everyone either loves to hate or hates to love. Steve sat down with Pansy Division's Luis Illades while recording their new album and talked about everything from working for major labels to playing guitar to the state of punk rock today. Also interviewed in PP26: Avail, Smart Went Crazy, Servotron, Polyvinyl Records, Compound Red and Red Monkey. Any articles? You go that right. Touch & Go Records just suffered a major loss in a court case with the Butthole Surfers over the Butthole's back catalog. Lawyer and Punk Planet columnist Darren Cahr gives us the play by play. The Clinton Administration has repeatedly denied funding to needle exchange programs even in the face of hard research & facts that prove that clean needles in the hands of the people means less HIV infections spread. Charlie Bersch exposes the Administration's ignorance in the face of a growing crisis. Whole Foods has become the dominant player in the natural foods game—Punk Planet gives the whole truth about this less-than-progressive company. Plus, San Francisco lost a graffiti artist this year, Punk Planet writes the story of the tragic death of TIE. The DIY files this issue teaches women simple and natural ways to achieving better vaginal health. Jam Packed at 156 pages.

PP27 A talk with Kathleen Hanna. In this rare in-depth interview, Kathleen talks about the end of Bikini Kill, her new project Julie Ruin and her feelings on punk, feminism, economics, art and more. Kathleen has never been one to mince words, and she doesn't hold back this time either. This is truly a must-read interview! Also interviewed in PP27: pop-punk heroes Discoutalk about life on the road, Washington DC's Chrom-Tech talk about being crazy but not insane, grindcore legends Assück talk about being heavy for so many years, the PeeChees give some hints as to what it's like to be the sexiest band on the planet and Prank Record's Ken Sanderson talks about being the clean kid in a smelly, smelly scene. Articles? Yep yep. In "Rebels Without a Cause," Punk Planet looks into the growing hysteria surrounding teen violence; PP peels back the media's theme music and info-graphics and looks at the real problems and real solutions. Jon Strange breaks the law and travels with a group bringing humanitarian aid into Iraq—this trip has been all but ignored by the mainstream press, read it in Punk Planet first! Marc Bayard is the first person to teach a college course based on punk—he writes about his experience in "Punk 101." Finally, two anti-racist skinheads were murdered in Las Vegas this July—Punk Planet investigates. All this plus the regular columns, DIY, reviews and more! 156 pgs

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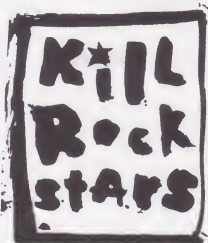
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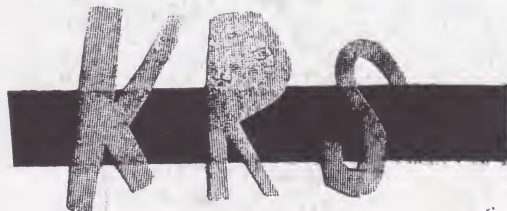


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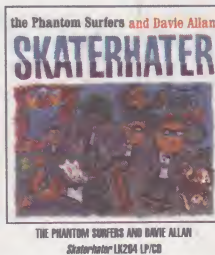
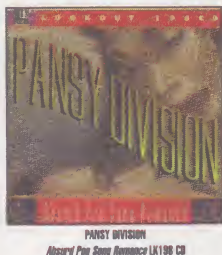
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